

AMOS DUNKEL OARSMAN



JAMES OTIS





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There was a deafening report ; the sloop reeled under the recoil of the swivel, and I believed we had blown the entire boat load into eternity.—Page 311.

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Amos Dunkel.

AMOS DUNKEL, OARSMAN.

A STORY OF THE WHALE BOAT NAVY OF 1776.

By JAMES OTIS. *Kaler*



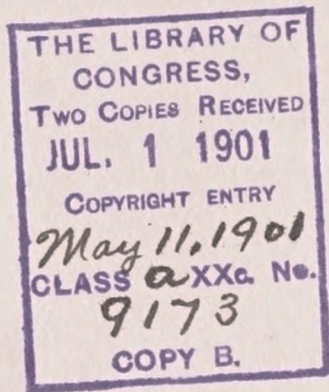
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AMOS DUNKEL, OARSMAN.

BY JAMES OTIS.

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NOTE.

“DURING the entire period of the Revolution the British held New York City, a part of Westchester County, and all of Staten and Long Islands under military rule. There were no elections—no voting except at annual town meetings—none except town taxes to pay—no judges—no courts of civil judicature, their place being supplied by the arbitrary fiat of a King’s justice or some military character. True, a summary Court of Police was after a while established in New York City; and at length, in the year 1780, for the greater convenience of His Majesty’s loyal subjects on Long Island, a Court of Police was also opened in Jamaica. The inhabitants could not go to or from the city, or bring out goods, without a permit. The price of wood and farmer’s produce was regulated by proclamation; their horses, wagons and persons, could at any time be impressed into the King’s service at a stipulated price. In the winter season almost every village and hamlet was filled with British soldiers and wagoners, billeted in the people’s

houses, or cantoned in temporary huts. The consequence was, a ready market and high price for such of the farmer's produce as had not been previously pilfered. The farmers flourished on British gold ; but as there were few opportunities for investing it, and no banks of deposit for safekeeping, they were compelled to keep their money by them, and were often robbed. The churches, not of the established faith, were mostly occupied by soldiers, or used as store-houses and prisons ; some were even torn down.

“In Suffolk County (Long Island) the illicit trade forms a striking feature. This consisted in buying imported goods in New York City (with the professed design of retailing them to faithful subjects in the County), and then carrying them down the Island to secret landing-places, whence they were sent across the Sound in whale-boats, under cover of night, and exchanged with the people of Connecticut for provisions and farmers' produce, of which the British army stood in great need. Though this trade was prohibited by both American and British authority, yet the cunning of the smugglers (who often acted as spies) generally eluded the sleepy vigilance of government officials. This trade was protected by the sparse population

of Suffolk County, the extensive sea-border, the absence of a British armed force, and the proverbial insincerity of the people in their professed allegiance.

“Owing to this Whiggish feeling of the inhabitants, every invading party of their brethren from the Main—whether to Sag Harbor, St. Georges, or Slongo—always found ready and effectual aid in guides, food, or information. Indeed, Washington used to say that he always had more correct knowledge by spies, of the position and designs of the British army on Long Island, than any other place. In fine, the British authority in Suffolk County was little more than an empty shadow.

“Quite different was the state of things in Queens and Kings Counties. Here a great body of the people were at heart loyal, the settled parts were more compact, and rarely free from the presence of armed troops, spreading dissipation and shining gold with open hand.

“Although the people of Long Island had taken an oath of fealty to the British crown in 1776, they were never deemed *bonâ fide* British subjects, and on the return of peace, in 1783 (with the exception of a few who were attainted of treason), they quietly slipped off their oath

with their loyalty, and, without the formality of abjuring their allegiance, took their places among the citizens of these free and Independent States." —Onderdonk's "Revolutionary Incidents."

The story which here follows cannot in truth be called my own, since it is in greater part taken literally from the worn and musty pages of that which Amos Dunkel entitles "his confession."

It has been edited carefully, with a thorough verification of dates and incidents, and some of the language changed in order that it may be better understood by the reader of to-day, yet it remains in fact the story of Amos Dunkel, who having, together with the other members of the family, sworn allegiance to the king, afterward did valiant service in behalf of the struggling Colonists as a member of that "Whaleboat navy," concerning which the historian spends but few words, although General Washington himself was disposed to give it great credit.

JAMES OTIS.

AMOS DUNKEL, OARSMAN.

CHAPTER I.

MYSELF.

I, AMOS DUNKEL, who am about to set down certain events that my descendants may know why the Dunkel family gave no heed to their oath of fealty sworn solemnly to the king, was born in the settlement of Flushing, on Long Island, in the year 1760, therefore in '76 I was only a lad, counting by age ; but a man grown so far as experience and hard knocks were concerned.

At the beginning of the year when the Colonists had the bravery to declare themselves free and independent, baptizing such declaration with their blood, my father, Seth Dunkel, my two brothers, Zenas and Moses, and myself, were, in a certain measure, forced to swear allegiance to the king, and at the time the four of us fully intended to keep our solemn word, which was about all we could really call our own,

being well-nigh impoverished by one army or the other.

We were then ready to lodge information against the Whigs, and glad to serve the Tories ; but when General Woodhull was killed in such a cowardly manner I believed that we were justified in changing coats, and in giving all our time and strength to the so-called Cause of Freedom.

Here is, in brief, the story of that dastardly deed which brought about a thorough change of heart in the Dunkel family :

The general had gone to Jamaica with ninety men to gather cattle for the Whig army, and the only officer with him was Colonel Robinson. The troops were sent eastward under command of the colonel, General Woodhull lingering to receive an expected order from the Congress, which was then at Harlem. Failing to get the orders, he set out alone, riding as far as Carpenter's Inn, when he was overtaken by a thunder-storm and sought shelter.

It was the 28th day of September when the old gentleman thus set out. I remember well the date, because my brother Zenas and myself had but then decided to present ourselves in New York City as recruits for his majesty's light dragoons on the 29th, and were yet discussing the

matter when we saw a detachment of the 17th dragoons, the very body we were most eager to join, ride through the town in hot haste.

They hauled up at Mrs. Cebra's house, which was not more than a stone's throw from my father's, and, hastening out regardless of the storm, Zenas and I arrived just as the officer in charge of the detachment was asking if Colonel Robinson was there.

Robert Moore, one of the Newton family, who had stopped at the house to keep Mrs. Cebra company during the tempest, for she was in mortal fear of lightning, came to the door to make reply to the horseman's question, and in an instant the officer struck at him with a saber, missing the man's arm by a hair's breadth.

Zenas and I were astounded at such action, for Robert Moore was a faithful subject of the king ; but we had a better understanding of the matter when one of the troopers cried out that he who stood in the doorway was not Colonel Robinson.

Then Master Moore, harboring no malice, even though the blow had but just missed maiming him for life, explained to the officer of the dragoons that Colonel Robinson and General Woodhull had ridden eastward, whereupon the troops were ordered on at full speed once more, and the

sequel to the sad story was told us within the next four and twenty hours.

When the horsemen rode up to Carpenter's Inn at full speed, their sabers flashing in the glare of the lightning, the old general came out of the house and went into the horse-shed, where he was in the act of mounting his own steed at the moment the dragoons were upon him.

Captain Oliver Delancy, who was in command of the troops, shouted while he was yet a dozen yards distant :

“Surrender, you rebel !”

The general wheeled around quickly ; understood that resistance would be worse than useless, and, drawing his sword, extended the hilt toward Captain Delancy, who cried as he received it :

“Now shout ‘God save the king’ !”

“I will cry with a right good will, ‘God save all honest men,’” the old man replied.

“Shout ‘God save the king’ !” the captain insisted, leading his troopers yet nearer the general.

“God save all honest men, and that should include even kings,” General Woodhull replied with some heat, and the words were hardly more than spoken when the entire force was striking at him with their sabers.

But that there were so many, the old man would have been killed in a twinkling ; but the troopers stood in the way of each other, and no more than three weapons struck his white head.

After they had sufficiently hacked their defenseless but undaunted prisoner, he was mounted, the blood streaming from his wounds, behind one of the horsemen, and the party rode back to Jamaica in hot haste lest the rebel force should return.

General Woodhull was taken to Hinchman's tavern, and there his friend Dr. Ogden, seeing the poor man, asked permission to dress his wounds ; but the request was refused. A British surgeon bound up carelessly the most severe of the cuts, and further than that the general was given no nursing or attention.

I afterward saw the sleeve of his shirt, which had in it seven gashes, and his hat literally cut to ribbons.

Next day he was taken to New Utrecht and put on board an old vessel that had been used to transport live stock, and on which were no quarters such as should have been given to the vilest criminal, to say nothing of one whose greatest crime consisted in the determination to

do what he might toward throwing off the yoke of the king.

The general was so near death by this time that even Captain Delancy's heart was moved with pity, and after two hours or more had passed, he was removed to the house of Wilhelmus Van Brunt, which the king's troops had converted into a hospital.

Speedily his wounded arm, having been so long uncared for, began to mortify, and it was decided to take it off. Thereupon the general sent express to his wife that he had no hopes of life, and requested her to gather up what provisions she could and hasten to his bedside. She took from her farm a wagon-load of bread, crackers, hams, butter and the like, and drove with all speed, arriving just in time to hear his dying words, which were that she should distribute the food among the suffering, starving Whig prisoners.

The poor woman went back to her home with the corpse of her husband, and before he was hardly more than buried one of the dragoons, going out foraging, which is but another word for stealing, was taken prisoner by Colonel Robinson.

I have since read what the colonel wrote as the dragoon's confession of that black-hearted crime,

and can set it down word for word as it appeared on the paper which was left for a time with Mrs. Cebra :

“Robert Troup says that while he was on board a transport used for cattle General Woodhull was brought over the rail in a shocking, mangled condition ; that he asked the general the particulars of his capture, and was told that he had been taken by a party of light-horse under command of Captain Oliver Delancy ; that he was asked by the captain if he would surrender ; that he answered in the affirmative, provided he would treat him like a gentleman, which Captain Delancy assured him he would do ; whereupon the general delivered his sword, and that immediately after the said Oliver Delancy struck him ; and others of his party, imitating his example, did cruelly cut and hack him in the manner he then was ; that although he was in such a mangled and horrid situation, he had not received the proper attention from a surgeon, nor would Captain Delancy allow him a bed upon which to lie while he remained on board the transport.”

As if all that was not enough to prevent Zenas and I from joining the king's forces, we saw, on

the day after General Woodhull was the same as murdered, old Elias Baylis arrested as a spy, and this when Master Baylis was, and had been for ten years past, totally blind. His only crime seems to have been that he was chosen chairman of the Jamaica committee of defense.

It can well be supposed my father's family discussed these brutal acts at great length. We knew that both Whigs and Tories had shown themselves to be cruel ; but never before had we supposed the king's officers would deliberately murder a defenseless old man, for it was neither more nor less than murder to thus despatch him after he had delivered up his sword, and for the first time we deeply regretted having sworn allegiance to his majesty.

My father bade us remember that an oath cannot be taken and then flung lightly aside like an old shoe ; that we were bound to the king of our own free will, and it stood us in hand to consider well both his majesty's cause and our own situation before we came to a decision.

Emboldened by the tone of his voice, I asked if he would be pleased at seeing us members of Captain Delancy's dragoons, whereupon he shook his head decidedly ; but made no remark.

“If it should be known that you no longer re-

garded your oath of fealty, your liberty, if not your lives, would be in danger here," my mother said warningly.

"Then Moses cried hotly :

"It would seem as if our lives were in danger whether we hold to the king or join the Whigs. As for me, I have decided within this last hour to enlist in the ranks of those whom Captain Delancy calls 'rebels.'"

This bold speech took me by surprise, for until Moses spoke I had had no idea of attempting anything against his majesty ; but once the words were uttered it came into my mind that we might do worse than throw in our lot with the rebels.

Once it had been suggested among us that we might disregard the oath which had been taken, all talked freely of the situation. Until Moses gave words to the idea, each member of the family had refrained from saying that which was in his mind, for I am certain we were of but one opinion after the murder of General Woodhull.

And when we had decided to cast off all allegiance to the king, it was the same as if we announced our purpose of enlisting in the rebel army, for, as my mother had said, our lives would be in danger once the disaffection was known to the Royalists.

From that moment we spoke only of how we might best serve the colonists, with the least danger to those whom we loved.

In years to come the words as written above may sound strange, and need explanation, for it would ordinarily seem as if what might be done by men would not work harm to their relatives, but true it is that both Whigs and Tories often punished the wives or mothers of those who differed with them in political opinions. As an example, and at the risk of setting down too much in the effort to prove that our family did not commit a crime in breaking the oath taken, I propose to relate one or two incidents to prove how far men could go in the way of cruelty to uphold or strengthen their peculiar views.

One week before the murder of General Woodhull, a detachment of the 17th light dragoons visited Great Neck and Cow Neck in search of those who opposed the rule of the king. They arrived at the home of Adrian Onderdonk near about noon, surrounded it so that no living creature larger than a cat might make its escape, and began searching the buildings. An officer and three men did the work, up-stairs and down, thrusting their bayonets or swords into beds, curtains and every possible hiding-place, until

very much property had thus been wantonly destroyed.

Master Onderdonk was found sitting in his kitchen, and the destruction of property went on after he was made prisoner.

When he asked why the arrest was made, the officer replied with an oath :

“ Your neighbors complain of you.”

Master Onderdonk was bound on a horse, and taken to New York, where, at the time when we Dunkels were turning from Tories to Whigs, he was confined in the sugar-house, transformed to a prison, on Liberty Street, with the brute Cunningham as his jailor. It was said by one whose word we could not doubt, that in this building the prisoners were packed so closely that when, after having lain down at night to rest, because of the hardness of the oak planks they wished to turn over to ease their aching bones, it was necessary the entire company make the same movement, else would it have been impossible to accomplish a change of position.

That is only one of many acts of cruelty perpetrated by the British, and the Whigs were not so very far behind them in violence, as will be shown by this case of John Skidmore's, who lived at Oyster Bay.

The aged couple had sold their farm and mill, and were supposed to have a large amount of money on hand. One night, about two weeks before General Woodhull's murder, the door of their dwelling was forced open by three men whom Master Skidmore recognized as Whigs, although their faces were blackened, and he was commanded to give up his money. He handed the robbers a purse, saying it contained all the cash of which he was at that time possessed, having just invested a thousand dollars in property on the Connecticut shore.

The robbers beat him and his wife with the butt-ends of their pistols, in the effort to make them produce more money, until the old people were well-nigh dead, and in fact they did die within four and twenty hours. Their negro, Jack, a stout fellow, when he heard the noise, mounted the kitchen loft and drew the steps after him. They fired repeatedly through the floor; but, failing to inflict a serious wound, withdrew after having set the building on fire, and but for the exertions of the slave, poor Master Skidmore and his wife would have been burned to death.

I could fill many pages with true stories of violence done women because their male relatives had joined one army or the other, and although

the British themselves took but small part in such work, there was little to choose between the Tories and the Whigs.

All these things were in our minds on that evening when we of the Dunkel family discussed plans for taking sides with the colonists who were opposed to the king's rule, and the conversation was carried on in whispers lest some prying Tory should be listening at the door or window to give information concerning us.

It was agreed without much argument that it would not be safe for us to enlist in the Colonial army near our home, therefore we cast about to decide which move was the safest, and my father finally settled the question.

“Master Pratt has been telling me of the trading carried on by Captains Adam Hyler and William Marriner,” he said, speaking slowly as if to make certain we understood all he would convey. “They began by trading, and are now worrying the British to such an extent that an armed force was sent out last week to destroy their fleet of boats, for it is said those two men own no less than twenty-five well equipped whale-boats, each thirty or thirty-five feet long, and carrying from six to twenty oars. There is a field in which we might aid the Whigs, earning

enough to make a paying business out of it at the same time that we served the colony."

I had never heard of these men, and asked further concerning them.

"They sail from New Brunswick," my father explained, "and, therefore, you will be enlisting so far from home that we may keep the matter a secret until it shall be possible to remove your mother to a place more safe than this will be for her after it is known we have turned our coats."

"And you would have us go there, sir?" Moses asked eagerly.

"Not all at the same time," my father replied, for he was a cautious man, and given to looking as well after the pennies as to his own safety. "Suppose we draw lots to decide which two of us shall make the first venture? If it proves to be a paying business, word can be sent to those who remain, and in due time we will all be together again, with your mother where we may be sure the Tories cannot maltreat her. The two who stay here will deny knowing anything about those who have departed, and can look after the home until we conclude to abandon it finally."

To us lads the plan seemed admirable, the more so because we would not be taking as many risks

as if all went at the same time, and we were eager to have the matter settled without delay.

My father splintered off four bits of pine from the bundle of kindlings which had been left near the fireplace ; two were long, and the others much shorter.

“ Your mother shall hold these,” he said, “ in such fashion that the four ends only show beneath her hand. Those who draw the longest are to make the first venture.”

At first mother protested against taking any part in what she believed to be a wicked game. Until this moment she had not joined in the conversation ; but now she declared it was the same as forcing her to send her sons or husband to their death, perhaps, and she would have no hand in it.

Zenas, who was ever a master at an argument, soon showed her that two of us would go whether she held the lots or not, and by thus helping us to a decision she was no more than aiding in an impartial choice.

Finally she allowed herself to be convinced, for Zenas could bring her around to his way of thinking more quickly than any one else, and the lots were drawn.

Zenas and I held the longest splinters of pine, and, never dreaming how much of danger we

would be called upon to share, I was in the highest spirits because of being the first to make the venture.

Once the question was settled my father began laying plans for our journey to New Brunswick. There was no further argument, for the Dunkels are not prone to linger over any business that has once been decided upon. The only proposition before us was as to how we might gain the headquarters of this whale-boat navy, and, once there, make it known to Captain Hyler or Captain Mariner that we were lads who, having promised, could be depended upon. The fact that we were ready to forswear ourselves in the matter of allegiance, might cause a stranger to think we would as readily turn our coats the other way.

Again it was my father who decided for us.

“The safest plan is to journey by boat,” he said after some deliberation. “To go by land would insure your running upon squads of the king’s soldiers who would require a pass, or send you to prison as suspects. As for credentials, I reckon Nathan Pratt will provide them. It is in my mind that he told me of what was being done near about New Brunswick, in the belief that we might turn Whigs after the murder of the general, and if such was the case, he will have no

hesitation in representing you as lads who can be relied upon. I will see him this night."

Having said this my father went out of the house, leaving us lads to discuss our new politics, and Moses to mourn because he had not been so fortunate as to draw a longer splinter. In less than an hour he had returned, and there was a certain tone of satisfaction in his voice as he said, while holding out a folded paper :

"Master Pratt has taken my word, and you boys will be able to give a good account of yourselves before Captain Hyler. Here is a letter which will serve your purpose ; but, if seen by Britisher or Tory, insures your imprisonment in the sugar-house while the brute Cunningham vents his spite upon us."

"When are we to set out ?" Zenas asked.

"At daybreak ; there is nothing to delay you here, and good reason why you should make haste to get away. Amos shall carry the letter," he added to me, "and I charge you to keep well in mind the danger which awaits us all, even your mother, if it be seen by those who yet serve the king."

I took the paper hesitatingly ; for the first time I began to understand that it was neither a simple nor a safe piece of business to thus change our

coats. It was too late to draw back now, however, unless I was minded to let my own people believe me a coward, and death would have been better than that.

“If you lads are to leave us so soon, it is time you went to bed,” mother said, thinking only of our comfort or necessities as she ever has done, God bless her! “We who are to remain at home will make all arrangements for the journey while you are sleeping.”

I kissed her most affectionately that night when I was so soon to be parted from her, and fervently wished I had shown her earlier in life all the love which was in my heart. It is only when a boy is about to leave home with the chances he may never return, that he fully realizes how dear to him is his mother!

Perhaps I am making too many words in telling the story of how Zenas and I cast our fortunes with the colonists; but yet it seems to me that the reader should have some insight into my heart in order to understand my sensations when dangers crowded thick and fast upon us.

Despite the change which was to come so soon, we fell asleep immediately after lying down, and neither of us was conscious of anything more

until my father called us just before the break of day.

Then all the preparations had been made. Our boat, a fourteen-foot shallop, carrying two pairs of oars and a small sail, was provisioned for a week's journey, and our muskets, with a reasonable amount of powder and balls, were near the door in prime condition, Moses having spent the night cleaning them.

"You are to set off at once," father said when we appeared. "I would have you gone before any of our neighbors are astir, and then there will be fewer questions to answer. Eat your breakfast, lads, and do not spend many seconds in leave-taking. Remember, word is to be sent home at every safe opportunity, and when you write that it will be well for Moses and I join to you, we will set off without delay for New Brunswick, bringing your mother with us."

I tried to obey his commands; but the food choked me, and I could swallow no more than two or three mouthfuls when a big lump in my throat overpowered me. Rising quickly from the table I kissed my mother, and saw that she was bravely trying to keep back the tears from her eyes.

Father literally pushed me out of doors lest I

should grow faint-hearted before the journey was begun, and I went alone to the shore, where I was shortly joined by Zenas, who kept his face averted as if fearing I might read there the grief which assailed him as it did me.

Moses and my father remained in the doorway until we had pushed off from the little wharf where were moored all the shallops owned by the people of the town, and then they turned suddenly away, causing it to seem to me just then as if we had been suddenly deserted by those who should have stood by us till the last.

Twice I attempted to speak to Zenas ; but words choked me, and I was forced to remain silent or show him that I was nigh to bursting with suppressed tears.

He made a braver effort than was possible for me, and said in what he most likely counted should be a tone of careless gaiety :

“It appears, Amos, as if were left to our own devices, and unless we keep a stiff upper lip there are many chances that betwixt Britisher, Tory and Whig, we may come to grief.”

“If we do it will be no fault of ours, Zenas,” I replied, but not without an effort.

Each of us knew full well how much of sorrow there was in the heart of the other, yet we did



Moses and my Father remained in the doorway until we had pushed off from the little wharf.—Page 20.

Amos Dunkel.

not dare touch upon that subject by so much as a hint.

“At all events,” he said after a short pause, during which we had settled ourselves to the oars, “we have got well away from town without any of our neighbors being the wiser for the move. It only remains now to fool the Britishers, for there’s little fear from Tories while we’re afloat.”

He had no more than spoken before we were startled by a hail from the shore, and, looking around quickly and not without fear, I saw that lad above all others whom I would have been best pleased to avoid.

It was Simon Hunt, one of the hottest Tories in Flushing, and a boy whom I would not have trusted with the lightest secret. Because we Dunkels had sworn fealty to the king, thereby showing ourselves of the same color as himself and his vagabond father, the lad took advantage of every opportunity to make it appear that we were close friends, when, as a matter of fact, I would not have wiped my old shoes upon him. He was utterly without principle; hesitated at no dastardly deed if thereby he could injure a Whig, and seemed to believe that by great activity in denouncing those who were not of the same way

of thinking, he was making for himself a famous name.

Zenas muttered something which I did not understand, and left me to salute the lad whom I had promised more than once to give a severe flogging because of his misdemeanors.

“Where are you two bound?” Simon asked as if he had a right to question me.

I shut my teeth hard before answering, in order that my anger and grievous disappointment be kept within bounds, and then said with an effort at carelessness :

“We count on trying our luck at fishing. Joseph Nugent sold all his catch yesterday to the dragoons at Jamaica, and we hope for the same good luck.”

“Pull in and take me aboard. I don’t mind spending a day on the water if by so doing a few shillings may be earned.”

“We haven’t brought food enough for three, and you’ll be forced to go without your dinner,” I said warningly, making a feint to pull the shallop around.

Among his other faults, Simon was a regular glutton, and under ordinary circumstances the thought of suffering from hunger would have been enough to prevent him even from denounc-

ing a Whig ; but on this morning it was much as if the cur had a suspicion of our purpose, for he replied in a friendly tone :

“I reckon you two have got enough to satisfy me, if it's divided fairly, so pull in this way and we'll have a jolly day of it.”

The bow of the shallop was already swinging shoreward under the impetus of my stroke, and I was at a loss to understand how we might refuse without making, perhaps, a dangerous enemy ; but Zenas, quicker of wit than I, and knowing that we must part company with the fellow at once, said sharply as he pulled the light craft seaward :

“You may be willing to go on short allowance, Simon ; but I'm not of the same mind. Amos and I count on doing a full day's work, when an empty stomach won't be comfortable. You shall go with us to-morrow, for we'll keep at the work so long as fish can be swapped for silver.”

When the shallop swung around Simon could see, because of standing on the bank, which was several feet higher than the level of the water, our stock of provisions and clothing in the stern-sheets, and this was sufficient to prove that we had not told the truth in regard to our purpose.

“Look here!” he cried sharply, as if it was his right to dictate, “where are you two bound?”

There was no longer any sense in trying to mince matters, and, besides, my temper had got the best of me, therefore I replied defiantly:

“It is no affair of yours where we are going. It’s enough that we don’t choose to have you as a passenger!”

“Perhaps you may get more of me than you’ll like!” he cried in a rage. “You can’t shut my eyes when there’s treasonable doings on hand. I saw your father coming out of Nathan Pratt’s house last evening, and that’s enough to show there’s mischief afoot! Why did he visit that miserable Whig?”

“That’s a question you can ask him, and perhaps he’ll be willing to answer, though I much misdoubt it,” Zenas said hotly, for by this time his temper had risen quite as high as mine. “Haven’t the Dunkels taken the oath?”

“Yes, but do they mean to keep it?” Simon screamed. “If you don’t take me aboard that boat I’ll lodge information against your whole family before the sun sets to-night!”

This threat alarmed me, for I knew only too well that in such times any information lodged against a man was the same as opening the

prison doors to him, and I let the oars fall, whereupon Zenas whispered :

“Don’t play the fool now when you need to have your wits about you ! If we take him on board he’ll see enough to prove that we’ve turned Whigs, and he can do less harm now than if we betray everything ! Pull your best, and give no heed to his threats !”

“What are you two traitors whispering about ? Simon screamed. “Put in shore or I’ll have the dragoons after you before you’re an hour older !”

“If the dragoons can catch a boat I’d like to see the sport,” Zenas said with a laugh, and at the same instant both of us laid down to the oars with such will that our craft was an hundred feet distant before Simon fully understood that we were really leaving him.

The cur ran along the shore shouting threats and foul words at the full strength of his lungs, hoping most like to rouse the village ; but we continued at our work, and before five minutes had passed were beyond earshot.

“A fine mess we’ve made of it !” Zenas finally said after we had rowed in silence for some time, and could no longer see the wharf we had just left. “It’s certain that Simon

Hunt will lodge information as he threatens, and we know how slight a word is needed in these times to deprive a man of liberty."

"We should have taken him with us," I replied moodily.

"To what end? Once he had a full view of all we've got on board, the secret would be his."

"I would have made certain he was not able to use it until the remainder of our family had gotten clear of Flushing."

"And do you think we might be able to make our way past the British ships with a prisoner on board?"

"Why not?"

"Because he could not be hidden here, and even though he was gagged, the sight of a lad unable to move—for of a surety it would be necessary to bind the cur—must necessarily reveal more of the story than we could afford to have known."

I understood even while I argued, that it would have been impossible to carry Simon Hunt away with us as a prisoner, and yet I held to the idea like a peevish child, so great was my terror lest those we loved should come to harm through our encounter with the rabid Tory.

"Think of the danger to which he can expose

our parents !” I cried in an agony of apprehension. “It is our duty to go back and warn them of that which threatens.”

“Listen closely to me, Amos, and make certain you understand well all my meaning, for if it so be you hold to the idea of turning back, after I shall have spoken my mind, we will put the shallop about in a twinkling. Therefore take heed against mistaking my words.”

Zenas ceased rowing as he spoke, and turned to look at me. His face was ghastly pale, his lips twitching convulsively, proof of the excitement under which he was laboring, and these evidences of fear in a lad who had never before shown such signs, whatever the situation, moved me powerfully.

“If we put back to Flushing now it will be seen that all which Simon Hunt charges against us is true,” he continued, speaking slowly as if weighing well each word. “By this time the vicious Tory has aroused at least half a dozen of the townspeople, particularly those of his own stripe, and once we land the shallop will be overhauled whether it be our pleasure or no. Lads do not go out fishing for a single day with provisions sufficient for a week’s rations. Neither do they set off on any ordinary journey with

such a supply of ammunition as we have on board. It is true Simon will lodge information against our parents and our brother; but shall we be able to prevent it by returning to furnish the cur with the proof he needs? It appears to me that the moment has come when we cannot give aid to those we love, and would only be doing them an injury by going back. We must remain among the Whigs now, whatever may be our inclinations, and father and Moses will be forced to fight their own battles."

"I admit that what you say is true," I replied, when Zenas had ceased speaking. "You have convinced me it is better for all concerned that we push on, and yet I ask you if it be not a cowardly act to thus forsake in the time of their extreme danger those of our own blood?"

"So it would appear to him who knew not all the circumstances; but I repeat, that by going back we would be exposing them to yet more danger."

"We might at least warn them of what is like to happen?"

"By this time Simon Hunt has bawled his discovery throughout the village, and father knows as well as do we what danger threatens. All this is my way of looking at the situation;

but if you are yet of the opinion that it would be better to go back, I will never say a word against it, whatever may be the result."

I was convinced that Zenas' plan was the only one we could pursue, in view of all that had happened, and without further parley I gave in to him, saying as I did so :

"We will hold to the course set last night ; but it makes my heart ache to leave those who are in danger."

"As it does mine, Amos ; yet there must be many heart-aches before this war has come to an end, and our grief is no greater than that of thousands in these unhappy colonies which had better have paid a dozen unjust taxes than drench the land with blood."

Having said this my brother faced about once more, and we bent to our oars again ; but while I thus toiled there was ever in my mind the thought that if we had set off without preparation such as betrayed our purpose, it would have been far wiser, for what availed it if we were saved this or that discomfort when by enduring them we could have averted suspicion ? "

After a time my grief was partially diverted as I weighed our chances of gaining New Brunswick. On the previous night, when we were

excited with the thought of having thus radically changed our political views, I gave comparatively little heed to that which might be in our path.

Father had declared that we would not be justified in attempting to make a complete circuit of the island in order to avoid passing New York City, for if we were overhauled by one of the king's vessels while we were on the ocean, it would be impossible to give to our voyage such complexion as would prove us innocent of any designs against the Britishers. On the other hand, there were an hundred chances that we could slip past the dangerous points by lying up in the day, and moving only during the night once we were come near Brooklyn.

We were well acquainted with all the creeks and bays on the coast, and knew many a hiding-place which would serve our purpose ; but even then the danger was great, and I questioned again and again, without giving words to the thoughts lest I should dispirit Zenas, whether we were not nearer a British prison than was either father or Moses.

In fact, I was utterly cast down at the beginning of the perilous journey, and in such a frame of mind one cannot do his best when the time for action comes.

I regretted most sincerely that we had not remained true to the oath of fealty, for it seemed certain the king would triumph in the end, and by living quietly at home, having but little intercourse with our neighbors, it might have been possible for us to weather the storm in safety.

However, it was useless to cry over spilled milk, as I soon began to realize, and I set my teeth hard, resolving that, come what might, I would say no more against the course we had decided upon.

CHAPTER II.

CAPTAIN HYLER.

It was well for Zenas and I that we had ample occupation of body, otherwise we might, had it indeed been possible, have dwelt at greater length upon the trouble which threatened our loved ones.

We had fully committed ourselves to the venture, and knew that between us and Captain Hyler's quarters stretched many a long mile to be traversed, with possible dangers to be encountered at every rod of the journey.

It had been planned during our last evening at home that we should attempt to pass New York in the guise of fishermen returning to Staten Island, and, in event of being hailed by the enemy, we would heave to without delay, unless it so happened that the chances were greatly in favor of our escaping with whole skins. In other words, we proposed to obey when there might be danger in refusing, and to press forward at our best speed whenever the course was clear.

Had we not changed our politics so suddenly, we might have succeeded in getting a British pass to visit New York, when the peril would have been considered lessened ; but since there had not been time in which to do anything of the kind, it was better to banish from our minds the expedients which had been neglected.

Until nearly noon we pulled at the oars, and then a light breeze sprang up greatly to our relief, and under its influence the shallop glided over the water at a fairly good rate of speed.

We had seen two small vessels, both fishermen ; but gave them such a wide berth that they could not hail us.

Not until late in the afternoon did we arrive at that dangerous bit of water known as Hell Gate, and from this time on, until we had passed New Utrecht, there were perils on every hand.

When we had pulled the shallop over the rapids and were on the placid bosom of the river, Zenas suggested that we haul up on the shore for rest and sleep.

“The boat can be concealed almost anywhere hereabout, and after a short time of repose we will be in better condition for the struggle before us.”

I agreed to his proposition with the understand-

ing that we should get under way again at midnight, and, half an hour later, we were stretched at full length amid the bushes on shore while the shallop lay afloat hidden by the overhanging branches.

After partaking of a hearty meal washed down by home-brewed beer, I would have spoken concerning the possible fate of those we had left behind, but Zenas sternly forbade anything of the kind.

“Our own safety will require every effort, and it would be little less than a crime to dishearten each other when at any moment we may find ourselves confronted by the enemy,” he said sharply, not because of anger ; but in order to conceal his nervous fears. “Put all such thoughts from your mind so far as possible, and rest.”

With that he turned over as if to sleep, and I closed my eyes in the effort to follow his example ; but not until a full half the time allotted to the halt had expired, did slumber come to my relief. Try as I might, it was impossible to shut out from mind those who, as it then seemed to me, lay at the mercy of Simon Hunt. I went over and over again the details of our meeting with the cur, and pictured to myself his hastening away to lodge information against us. In fancy

I saw a detachment of dragoons riding into the town at full speed ; pulling up in front of our home ; dragging my parents and Moses away, and then I saw the vile prison in which they were lodged at the mercy of a merciless jailer.

Sleep did come, however, and it seemed as if I had no more than lost consciousness when Zenas aroused me as he whispered :

“It must be well on to midnight ; the stars are hidden by clouds, and we could have no more favorable time in which to pass the city.”

I was on my feet in an instant, and before thirty seconds elapsed we were pulling straight down towards where lay the British vessels, on each and every one of which it was reasonable to suppose strict watch was kept for just such fugitives as we had become.

If in thus trying to introduce my brother and myself I have made no mention of what had just taken place nearabout, it is because every person must know that the battle of Long Island had been fought not many days before, and New York was but lately occupied by the king's forces. I only mention these facts at this point in order that it may be understood why Zenas and I were in a certain degree ignorant as to the position of the Britishers. We had been often in the city

while the Continentals held it ; but since the battle there was so much of disturbance near-about our home that we thought it prudent to remain out of sight, even though calling ourselves loyal subjects of the king.

We rowed out into the darkness, fearing each moment lest we should run upon one of the war ships, and wholly ignorant as to which side the river might be safest for us.

As we approached the docks it was possible to see here and there the riding lights of the British fleet, and my heart was in my throat from the time we started until we were past the huge vessels whereon were those who would give us a most urgent invitation to stop in prison for a while if they but knew our errand.

Never a word did we speak during the perilous passage. When we were within a quarter of a mile of that craft which I afterward came to know was the prison-ship Jersey, I signaled to Zenas that he should steer and I row, for while both were at the oars we could not shape the proper course, and he at once acted upon my mute suggestion.

With all the skill at my command I plied the oars, and Zenas was no less cautious at his task. He steered the shallop here and there among the

fleet as if it had been broad day instead of the darkest night I ever saw, and to my great relief and surprise we entered the narrows without having been so much as hailed.

Twice we were nigh to coming full upon the river patrol ; but Zenas, motioning me to stop rowing, put the shallop well within the darker shadows of the shore, or close under the stern of a ship, and we escaped the danger in fine style.

Once we were in the narrows Zenas took his place on the forward thwart, and an hour later we were well passed the more serious dangers of the Staten Island shore.

From this time on it would be a question of work rather than peril, and I drew a long breath of relief at the same time that I said a mental prayer for the safety of those whom we had left behind.

Concerning the remainder of our journey it is not necessary I should set down many words. We went into cover on the lower end of Staten Island at sunrise, and remained there until evening, when the work with the oars was taken up once more, and thus we continued on, skulking under cover the greater portion of the daylight hours only to work like beavers after dark.

We were four days and nights making the

journey, and during all that time we had not spoken to a human being until after gaining the Raritan River, when we deemed it safe to hold converse with several fishermen we met.

Arrived at New Brunswick we were in a strange country, and had no more idea of where to look for those to whom we had letters of introduction than if we had never heard of the place.

It was Zenas who took charge of affairs once the voyage came to an end ; he hauled the shallop alongside a small schooner made fast to a dock, the crew of which promised to look after our belongings lest they should be stolen, and then we set out.

The search was not a long one ; the first person we met was well acquainted with Captain Adam Hyler, and directed us a short distance up the river where his fleet of whale-boats had been hauled on the bank.

Two hours later the captain himself came along bent on some business with a dozen young men who were loitering about as if having nothing on hand of more consequence than passing the time indolently, and immediately on opening the letter Zenas offered, he treated us with the greatest consideration.

“ Master Pratt is a good friend of mine, and

since he bespeaks my favor for you two lads, say what I can do ? ”

“ We have come to enlist in your service, sir,” Zenas said, coming to the gist of our business without parley.

“ In other words, you are ready to serve the Colonies ? ” the captain added in the tone of one who asks a question.

In reply Zenas told him all our story, from the day we took the oath of allegiance to the king until the present, and Captain Hyler listened as courteously as if we had been particular friends.

“ There’ll soon be more than you who’ll come over to us from the king,” he said with a smile.

“ The Britishers have begun to show how they count on bringing us to submission, and there are few who will stand such a lesson. I can’t promise anything in the way of wages, if you serve with me. Not that I’m saying we never have a few shillings to jingle in our pockets ; but all our money comes from the enemy, and it is share and share alike when gold or silver falls into our keeping. Because of owning the boats and being skipper, I take one quarter part of all we earn or seize from the Tories ; the remainder is distributed fairly among the crew.”

“ We didn’t count on getting more than our

food, sir," I made bold to say, whereupon the captain laughed heartily.

"Then you'll be more than satisfied with what can be picked up in what we call 'London Trading,' for my lads are not without something in their pockets the greater portion of the time, unless it so chances that the Britishers get us shut up in a hole, much as we are while the men-of-war remain in the lower bay."

"There are no ships below the narrows now, sir, as we well know," I made haste to say, and the captain laughed again, a trick he had as we afterward came to understand. He laughed when he was very angry, well pleased, or perplexed, and yet under any phase it was much as if he enjoyed such semblance of mirth.

"I had just heard that the bulk of the fleet were off the city, but counted on making more certain before venturing out. Now you have saved me the trouble of sending out a boat, and we'll leave the river to-night."

He turned to go as if the interview was at an end, but Zenas stopped him by asking :

"Are we to consider ourselves members of your crew, sir?"

"Of a verity you are, lads, and right glad am I to have those who can give me word of Long

Island matters, for I count on going there before many days have passed. Come with me, and I'll make you known to the lads who call me 'captain.' ”

But for being such a poor hand with a pen, and fearing lest this small yarn be drawn out at too great a length, I would set down here a description of Captain Hyler's "lads" who seemed particularly worthy of attention, and there were many. But, fearing lest that which was of great interest to me, might not be viewed in the same light by strangers, I will pass them by with a single word.

Grouped around the captain, listening intently to each word he spoke, one would have set them down for a throng of country bumpkins, apprentices or, in fact, anything rather than what they really were, as daring and courageous a body of young men as could be found in this or any other country. They were ready for any venture which might be proposed by their commander, and as Zenas and I came to know later, never stopped to ask whether the danger was likely to be great or little, if gold or only hard knocks would likely be their reward.

Take them all in all, I have never seen a finer or more spirited company of lads than these as I

met them that morning in October when Captain Hyler announced that at last the fleet would put to sea. You heard no boasting, no braggadocia or oaths; they were honest citizens striving to do their part in righting the wrongs of their countrymen, and offered great contrast to such Tories as Simon Hunt.

“Here are two mates, Zenas and Amos Dunkel,” Captain Hyler said as he led us toward the company. “You know full well that we of this fleet do not take up every young fellow who wants to serve in our ranks; but have agreed to be choice in the picking of our crew. I promise that these boys, who have made their way from Flushing with such skill as not to fall afoul of a Britisher, are fit to serve with us, and this I do because they come with a strong letter from a friend in whom I have every confidence. Make them welcome, for they’ve left behind a father and a brother against whom information is likely to be lodged with the Britishers, and, consequently, are feeling a bit sore at heart.”

The captain had no sooner spoken than the brave lads gathered around us, each striving to outdo the other in extending a friendly greeting, and at once Zenas and I felt that security which

comes from being in the company of warm friends.

When the ceremony of welcoming us was come to an end, Captain Hyler gathered his crew around him and spoke as follows :

“These lads who have just joined us are like to be of great service, for the very good reason that we must shift our cruising ground now the British have settled down to hold New York. While the harbor is filled with men-of-war we run too great risks in making a rendezvous on this river. I propose to try our fortunes on the other side of the city, sailing entirely around Long Island, and establishing quarters near by Oyster or Cow Bay, and then it is that Zenas and Amos Dunkel can serve as guides, therefore have they come in good time for us. The opportunities for work will be better there than here. We shall be handy to New York and the Connecticut shore, and if we do not succeed in making our names known to the Tories before next spring, it will be because all hands have rusted out with idleness.”

There was no noisy enthusiasm when the captain ceased speaking, but it could readily be seen that the young men were pleased with the proposed change, and after they had quietly discussed

the matter a few moments, the captain held at arm's length a paper which I had observed him take from the letter entrusted Zenas and I by Master Pratt.

“Here is a venture ready at hand as soon as we shall arrive on our new cruising grounds,” he said with a laugh, “and if this bold officer has in his possession the cash he agrees to pay for recruits, we will be doing a good stroke of work at the same time we strike a blow for those brave gentlemen who were so lately forced to leave New York to the mercy of the king's bullies.”

Then he read the following notice, which I set down here exactly as it was printed :

Lieutenant Colonel Emerick wishes to raise six companies of foot, to consist of 360 men ; and two troops of light dragoons, to consist of 100, who will immediately receive their bounty, before attested ; pay, clothing and provisions regular, agreeable to King's allowance, without clipping or deduction. Refugees paid the price of their horses. His soldiers live like gentlemen, and he treats all who behave well as brothers. Apply to Lieut. Col. Emerick, at Oyster Bay, who gives \$5 over and above the King's bounty.

“ GOD save the KING.”

“This is a piece of rare good luck for us,” Zenas whispered to me while the company were eagerly discussing the work proposed by their leader. “Unless Simon Hunt gets to work very quickly, we may be nearabout home with men

enough to care for our parents. As for Moses, he will, of course, ship with us at the first opportunity."

I did not reply by words ; but gripped his hand hard in token of my great joy that we were to retrace our steps at once, and with such a following that even a squad of the king's soldiers might be prevented from doing a mischief. I had never dreamed that we would be able to serve so near home, and, therefore, my joy was exceedingly great.

Captain Hyler interrupted my dreaming by asking concerning the coves and creeks near-about Oyster Bay, and Zenas made haste to assure him that we knew every foot of that shore as well as we did our own dooryard.

Within two hours of our meeting the captain, all was bustle and apparent confusion in the vicinity of the fleet. The boats were being overhauled, sails patched, and gear put into good condition. A certain number of lads were bringing provisions to the shore, while others made ready for departure the stores of ammunition, which were considerable.

Zenas and I had but little opportunity to aid in the work, so busy were we kept answering questions concerning that portion of Long Island

which was to be the rendezvous of the fleet ; but we did our best at working while satisfying the curiosity of our companions.

Captain Hyler decided that we should return in our own shallop, which craft would come in handy when we wished to make short excursions up the creeks, or in other shallow water. That we might have a crew of decent size, two lads—Elijah Cornwall and Reuben Jackson—were told off as our comrades.

Father had outfitted us in such a generous manner that we had on board all the ammunition which would be needed, and a goodly store of provisions yet remained, therefore our portion of the fleet was ready for sea without further preparation.

Captain Hyler was here, there, and everywhere during the time of making ready ; his odd laugh could be heard at frequent intervals as he moved around among the men, and before long I found myself listening for it with no slight amount of impatience, because it was in the highest degree soothing to a homesick lad like myself.

The fleet, without taking into consideration our shallop, consisted of eight stout whale-boats from thirty to thirty-five feet long, each fitted for eight

oars, and carrying two small sails. On every one was a swivel mounted well up in the bow, and I said to myself that our captain must be a wealthy man if he could buy and outfit so many vessels; but I afterward came to learn that he had been assisted by merchants of New Brunswick, who spent their money as a speculation whereby much might be gained, and little, save blood, which was inexpensive, could be lost.

Twelve men were appointed to each boat, and, later, I observed that every craft was fully manned, therefore Zenas and I were going back members of a force amounting to an hundred, and it would be strange if we could not give some valuable lessons to such vicious Tories as Simon Hunt and his following.

Although the British war vessels were in the upper bay, I had an idea that it might be dangerous for the fleet to put out in a body, for, if sighted by the enemy, it was certain we would be chased; but I soon came to learn that Captain Hyler was not a man who took unnecessary chances while engaged in the work of despoiling the Tories and Britishers.

It was no more than three o'clock in the afternoon when the commander came up to us four who manned the shallop, and said curtly:

“It is time you were getting under way. One of the fleet will follow a mile or so behind, and the end of the night journey is to be Hog Island inlet. Do you know that harbor?”

“Yes, sir, we have been there more than once,” Zenas replied.

“Very well. Get under way, and lay off the inlet until the last of the fleet arrives, in order to act as pilots. In case you see any force of the enemy nearabout, no matter how small, put back till you have warned each boat in turn, and make harbor at Barren Island. I do not count on letting the Britishers know we have left the river until after arriving at our cruising ground. Do you understand the order?”

“Yes, sir,” Zenas replied ; but I asked :

“What can be done in case, by some misfortune, we should fall into the hands of the enemy?”

“The crews of the other boats will have orders not to make the inlet until after having spoken with you. If your shallop is not to be seen, we shall conclude that some misfortune has befallen you, and put to sea or return here at once.”

He ceased speaking, turning away as if there was nothing more to be said, and we four leaped aboard the shallop without delay, all hands realiz-

ing that when an order has been given it cannot be obeyed any too quickly.

I looked upon Zenas as the skipper of our craft, and the other two lads seemed to be of the same opinion ; but neither my brother nor myself were disposed to assume the responsibility of running down the river according to our own judgment while we had on board those who were so well acquainted with the water.

Therefore it was Zenas proposed that Elijah Cornwall take charge until we were in the bay, where a straight course could be steered for Sandy Point, and to this the lad agreed.

There was but little wind, and we set off propelled by oars only, with the understanding that each couple should pull half an hour at a trick until it might be possible to make better speed under canvas.

CHAPTER III.

A PRIZE.

WITH a crew of four, pulling the shallop was no more than child's play, and our light craft was sent ahead at such speed as told that we had little to fear in the way of pursuit while the breeze was light.

We had agreed that each man of the couple on duty should work a pair of oars, and by such arrangement the shallop walked away in fine style. If it so chanced that we were pursued, each of us could take an oar, and then I felt certain we might fairly lift the craft out of water.

Of a verity we had been given the post of honor, counting it from the standpoint of danger, for if the enemy had been warned that Captain Hyler's fleet could come out of the river on this day, we of the shallop would be the first captured.

It was some such idea as this which I have just set down that Reuben Jackson gave words to half an hour after we had started, and I was

proud when Zenas replied in a tone of satisfaction :

“Then are Amos and myself so much the more fortunate. We did not count on remaining behind others when danger threatened, and should be grateful to the captain for putting so much dependence upon us.”

“By the time you have had three or four scrimmages I reckon you’ll be willing to give up the post of honor to any who may be longing for it,” Elijah said grimly, and I asked myself if it might not be possible that we had in him a timorous comrade.

Whether such suspicion was correct or no, he was a good boatman, as could be seen with half an eye, and unless we came across a very large force Zenas and I would be able to hold him up to his work, so I said to myself, thus proving that I knew very little regarding the services which were expected of us.

Night had come when we pulled out into the bay, and because there was no craft in sight we flattered ourselves that the run across to Hog Island inlet would be nothing more than a matter of so much labor at the oars.

Half an hour later we had good cause for a change of opinion, for then it was that we sighted

in the gloom ahead a small sloop which was standing on and off as if waiting for some one, or acting as guard-ship.

“That must be either a British or a Tory craft,” Elijah whispered, and I fancied that his voice trembled.

“Why might it not be sent on the same errand as ourselves?” Zenas asked, rising to his feet in order to bring the stranger the better into view.

“Because none of our friends would cruise here where nothing is to be gained. Those who call themselves traders know full well that no pickings will be found so near the British fleet. Why don’t you sit down?”

“Why not stand?” Zenas asked innocently, without changing position. “I want a good look at the sloop.”

“You are like to see more of her than is safe,” Elijah replied, petulantly, pulling Zenas back on the thwart. “By holding yourself erect you are giving those on deck a better chance to see us. Besides, it behooves us to put back at once.”

“Why? Simply because of seeing a small craft like that standing off and on?”

“Captain Hyler’s orders were that we put back to warn the other boats in case we saw the enemy in any force.”

“As I understood him, that order referred to whatsoever we might discover nearabout Hog Island,” Zenas said quietly, rising once more to his feet. “It was to be expected that we would sight the enemy in this vicinity, and there is no certainty we have done even so much as that, thus far.”

“We will put back,” Elijah said sharply, swinging the steering oar hard down, and thus bringing the shallop’s bow around in a twinkling.

I knew full well that Zenas would not tamely submit to such interference, even though Elijah Cornwall had served in the fleet for some time, while we were only newcomers, and, therefore, was expecting that which followed.

Zenas made one bound into the stern-sheets, tore the oar from Elijah’s hand, and said to me in the tone of one who will not brook interference :

“Take the forward oars, Amos, and pull till we are near enough to make out yonder sloop distinctly !”

“There cannot be two captains on one craft as small as this !” Elijah cried angrily.

“You are right, mate ; there is but one.”

“You yourself proposed that I should take charge.”

“Only until we were out of the river, Master Cornwall. You have piloted us into the bay, and now I claim the right to direct matters. In case you are afraid, we’ll set you ashore presently.”

Any one who had known Zenas well, would not have attempted an argument after he spoke in such a tone; but Elijah presumed upon his experience, and said pertly :

“You will have more sense after serving a few days under Captain Hyler. At present you have no idea as to what should be done in a case like this.”

“I know full well what *will* be done, Master Cornwall, and if it does not meet with the approbation of our commander, I, not you, will be called upon for explanations. Amos and I have been charged with the task of scouting in advance of the fleet, and we have no idea of running away the moment we sight the first sail. We are getting too near the stranger to permit of any very extended conversation; therefore you may hold your peace until I have done that which seems to me proper under all the circumstances.”

It pleased me to hear Zenas thus assert the authority which had been given him and myself by Captain Hyler, although I must confess that at the time I would have been better pleased to

send the shallop back over her course. I was not eager to have a scrimmage on our hands just then, lest, by getting the worst of it, we show our commander that we lads from Flushing were not to be depended on in the matter of discretion.

During the conversation between Zenas and Elijah, Reuben Jackson had not so much as opened his mouth, and I tried in vain to make out, by peering into his face now and then, which captain he would recognize.

The lad hung in the wind until his comrade began to sulk in silence, and then he took up the second pair of oars to aid me.

I had been pulling vigorously during the squabble, and, now that the sloop's bow was turned toward us, we approached the stranger more rapidly than was really pleasing to a timorous lad.

Zenas stood in the stern-sheets, the steering oar in one hand, and his eyes fixed on the approaching vessel. He wore an air of expectancy, as if he had recognized a friend, and I took it upon myself to whisper warningly :

“See to it you don't get so near that we can't crawl out of the way in case yonder sloop means mischief !”

“Are all three of you cowards ?” Zenas asked

scornfully, and, stung to the quick by the tone as well as the words, I replied curtly :

“The position of captain doesn’t give one the right to insult others who show every disposition to obey orders.”

“Forgive me, Amos !” he said quickly, and in a tone of deep concern. “I had no intent to hurt your feelings, knowing as I do that you will be close at my back whatever may come. My speech was hasty because of the fear that now, when we may prove ourselves of value in Captain Hyler’s fleet, there is even so much as a question of what ought to be done. Look around, lad, and say if you have seen that sloop’s bow before this night ?”

I did as he commanded, and after one glance, an exclamation of surprise burst from my lips.

“I reckon you knew her, eh ?”

“If we were nearabout Flushing I’d say she was the Princess,” I replied, looking more closely without changing my opinion.

“That is what has been in my mind these five minutes. We left her at the dock on the morning of setting off from home. Get out the muskets, for we may need them in a hurry !”

“Surely you don’t count on——”

Before I could finish the sentence we were hailed from the sloop, and to my astonishment I recognized the voice as that of Simon Hunt's.

"Boat ahoy !" the cur of a Tory cried in a tone of command.

"Ahoy on the sloop !" Zenas replied, speaking hoarsely in order to disguise his voice.

"Where are you from ?"

"New Brunswick."

Elijah half started to his feet as Zenas thus told the truth which was much the same as if he had acknowledged that we were Whigs.

"Where are you bound ?"

"Out for a look around, that's all."

"Come alongside and give a better account of yourself."

"Aye, aye, sir !" and Zenas spoke as if nothing would give him greater pleasure than to pay a visit to the sloop.

Now we knew that the vessel before us was the Princess, and it did not require any great amount of guessing to decide that Simon Hunt had set out in pursuit of us.

The sloop was hove to, and while Zenas steered the shallop straight toward her he reached over and seized his musket, saying as he did so :

"We'll take these 'ere fish with us, lads, an'

perhaps the gentlemen will be inclined to buy some of 'em."

We were now so near alongside the sloop that it was possible to make out the forms of four men—three standing well forward, and one at the wheel. Of course there might be more on board who were kept in hiding in order to deceive us ; but I believed that every member of the crew was on deck, and could have come nigh to calling each by name.

It was easy to understand that Zenas counted on making a prize of the Princess, and to my mind there was nothing to prevent, save the cowardice or ill-temper of Elijah Cornwall. If we worked in concert, following the lead of Zenas, I was confident the capture could be made, and we would thus clear the bay of one craft which might dispute the passage of the whale-boats, or, at the least, give the alarm in New York that the fleet had left the river.

"We know the crew of that sloop," I whispered to Reuben, "and if you fellows follow Zenas' lead, she'll be in our possession ten minutes from now."

"I'm ready to do my share," Reuben replied quietly.

"Cease rowing, and speak with Elijah. Zenas counts on all hands going over the rail at the

same instant, and there must be no hanging back."

It was as if at that moment I could read my brother's thoughts, and I observed that he nodded his head approvingly as he saw Reuben crawling aft toward his comrade.

We were now less than fifty yards distant from the Princess, and her crew was standing amidships, empty-handed so far as I could make out. Zenas was half crouching at the steering-oar in order that he might keep a hold upon the butt of his musket without such fact being noted by the enemy. My weapon lay across my knees, and Reuben held his by the muzzle as he whispered in Elijah's ear-

The success of the suddenly devised plan rested entirely with this fellow in the stern-sheets who had already shown that he was at heart cowardly, and I would have given much had I been able to tell him what he might expect from me in case he refused to obey the commands or the lead of Zenas.

To us, as it then seemed, this meeting with the Princess was a rare bit of good luck, and her seizure meant far more than the taking of so much property from the enemy. We could thus prevent her from raising a hue and cry about our

leaving home to join the "rebels," and at the same time capture a young villain whose every aim from this time on would be to do us an injury.

To my great relief and delight I saw Cornwall finally raise his musket from the bottom of the boat, and understood by his movement that he was willing to do his share toward making a prize of the Princess.

Simon was so hot after us that he could not wait until the shallop was alongside ; but cried out while we were yet half a dozen yards away :

"Have you seen anything of a small boat, something the size of your own, with two lads in her?"

"Yours is the first craft we have sighted since leaving the river ; but it may be we saw such a boat yesterday. Why don't you fend off there?" Zenas cried, as if angry because one of our party was not at the bow, and then leaped forward apparently in a rage to attend to our craft.

I believed this was a signal for us. Giving one more vigorous pull at the oars, I shipped them, and, trailing my musket that it might be the more nearly hidden, ran forward at his heels.

"Make this fast, will you?" he cried, throwing our painter over the rail with a spray of water following the wet rope, and thus blinding



Speedy action was necessary now if we would accomplish our purpose.
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Amos Dunkel.

for the moment those of our townsmen who were searching for two Whigs who had lately been Tories.

Speedy action was necessary now if we would accomplish our purpose, for Simon and his followers might recognize us at any moment, and such an event could not fail of bringing about instant preparations for our reception.

Zenas was quick as a cat in his movements ; as he flung the wet painter toward Simon he made a leap for the sloop's rail, and it is no exaggeration to say that I gained a foothold on the vessel's deck at the same instant he did.

It seemed to me that my brother sprang directly upon the Tory cur who had followed us, for the lad was down with Zenas kneeling on his breast, when I thrust the muzzle of my musket into the face of the fellow nearest.

Elijah and Reuben seconded our efforts nobly ; they were over the rail before the other members of the sloop's crew were quite certain whether our movements were the result of awkwardness or intention, and thus our enemies were made prisoners before my brother and I had been recognized.

In after days I saw many neat maneuvers ; but never one that was carried off in better shape than this, our first experience at armed rebellion.

Zenas had clutched Simon by the throat, the lad was so nearly strangled that before he recovered his breath sufficiently to make any resistance, he was bound to the rail with half a dozen turns of the halliards around his neck and arms.

Then my brother turned his attention to the other Tories, who were standing dazed and motionless in front of the muskets leveled at their breasts, and in less than five minutes every mother's son of them was as helpless as their bully of a leader.

In addition to Simon, we had captured three Tory neighbors, young fellows who had professed allegiance to the king in order to have a cloak for foul deeds, rather than to uphold his majesty's efforts in subduing rebellion.

Micah Williams, Ben Seaman and Clem Parker were the fellows who made up the crew of the Princess, and either of them would have sent Zenas and I to the gallows for the sole pleasure of seeing us choked to death, if such a situation of affairs could have been brought about without very much danger to themselves.

Simon literally foamed at the mouth when he saw how he had been outwitted, and during two or three minutes he poured out a torrent of vile

abuse upon us and our companions ; but without causing any great grief to Zenas or myself.

Then it was my brother took a hand at wagging his tongue, and with such effect that the Tory was speedily reduced to silence.

“ You are making a big mistake, Master Hunt, in abusing us when there is nothing to prevent our dropping you overboard with weight enough at your heels to insure speedy sinking,” he said with an assumption of anger which I knew was not real, because he could not well have given way to temper while the sense of victory was so strong upon him. “ All we want just now is a plain account of what you have been doing since leaving Flushing, and I warn you against lying, for a single untruth will lead to death.”

“ You’ll get nothing from me, you turn-coat !” Simon replied viciously.

“ Lend a hand, Amos,” Zenas said in a business-like tone. “ If there is no information to be gained from these fellows the sooner they go over the rail the better.”

I stepped forward as he spoke, and together we two began winding the halliards around Simon’s body until he could move neither hand nor foot.

“ You are to look around for something heavy

enough to sink him, while I truss up the others," Zenas said, as he began operations on Clem Parker, whom, as we well knew, was the biggest coward to be found on Long Island.

"What are you about?" the lad asked in evident terror.

"We count on getting rid of four Tories who will not be missed by the good people of Flushing," Zenas replied in a matter-of-fact tone.

"Would you murder us?" and Clem's voice was husky with fear.

"There is no such thing as murder in warfare. We have made prisoners of four enemies to the cause of liberty, and since it is not exactly safe to hold them, we count on putting the whole crowd out of the world by the simplest method."

Clem must have believed that we were prepared to do as my brother had threatened, for he began to beg piteously for life; but his companions remained silent, most likely waiting for more proof as to our murderous intentions.

"Will you tell me what I want to know?" Zenas asked, when young Parker was rendered perfectly helpless by the many turns of rope.

"I'll do anything you wish," the coward whined. "You wouldn't have the heart to kill one of your old friends, Zenas Dunkel!"

“At such a time as this I’d do anything to further my ends,” Zenas said, as if he was the most bloodthirsty wretch in the colonies. “Tell me exactly what you and your precious mates have been doing since we left Flushing, and if I ever learn that you’ve lied in the smallest particular, you shall be hanged or drawn, whichever may be most convenient.”

“Hold your tongue, you coward!” Simon cried in a fury. “They don’t dare harm a hair of your head!”

Clem hesitated, hoping most likely that his friend spoke the truth; but in a twinkling Zenas had him on the rail, while I made fast a boat’s killock to his feet.

“Don’t murder me when I’m willing to tell everything!” the coward cried, now convinced that we were ready to carry out our threats. “We haven’t spoken to a single soul since leaving Flushing, except when we showed our pass to an officer of one of the ships in the upper bay, and told him for whom we were hunting.”

“What was done before leaving Flushing?”

“Simon sent express to Lieutenant-Colonel Emerick at Oyster Bay, lodging information against your family, and then got a pass from Captain Downes.”

“If these rebels don’t kill you I will!” Simon cried in a rage.

“Never fear that he can work you any harm,” Zenas said soothingly, as he pulled the coward back to the deck. “Tell me how you three chanced to come in pursuit of us?”

“It was Simon’s doings. He had authority from Captain Downes to impress the Princess, and we thought it would be a fine adventure, that’s all.”

“What did you count on doing with us in case you were lucky in the chase?”

“Hold your tongue!” Simon roared in a passion.

Clem hesitated ; but when Zenas lifted him toward the rail he replied :

“He allowed to hand you over to the British in New York, and thus earn the reward offered for turn-coats.”

“Where is the pass from Captain Downes?” Zenas asked, as he allowed Clem to fall heavily on the deck.

“In Simon’s pocket.”

“We’ll drop these fellows in the hold, where they can’t make trouble for any save themselves, and then put back to meet the fleet, for unless I’m mistaken we’ll get to Oyster Bay more quickly than Captain Hyler counted on.”

CHAPTER IV.

UNDER FALSE COLORS.

THE capture of the Princess proved that my brother Zenas was the sort of a lad needed in the whale-boat navy ; for he not only had good ideas, but knew full well how they should be put into execution.

His first act, after Clem Parker had given all the information we needed, was to get the pass from Captain Downes which Simon Hunt had in his possession, and once this had been done we four lads were reasonably safe from interference by the Britishers, since we could show proper authority for being in the bay. There was no description of Simon or his followers on the document, and we would be able to play to perfection the rôle of Tories.

This Captain Downes who had given Simon a safeguard during “a cruise to Raritan Bay and back to Flushing” was a sour-visaged adherent of the king’s, who had never a friend in the town ; but who was ready at all times to do whatsoever

he might in the way of making trouble for others. I knew him full well, and understood with what satisfaction the old scoundrel had filled up the pass when he believed that by so doing he would be the indirect cause of sending Zenas and me to prison.

Downes had laid information against more people of Long Island than any other four men put together, and if it ever chanced that the American army got foothold round about Flushing, he would probably have had a very unpleasant time, if indeed he was so fortunate as to escape being hanged.

However, Captain Downes had unwittingly done us a good turn, and we might cruise to and fro a full four and twenty hours now that we had British sanction for so doing.

Zenas saw to it that the prisoners were trussed up in such fashion that they could neither aid themselves nor each other, and then at his suggestion we hoisted the shallop inboard, stowing her snugly in the hold.

Until all this work had been done Elijah Cornwall held his peace as if seriously disgruntled ; but when the Princess was brought around and headed for the Jersey shore he, most likely wanting to smooth matters before we met Captain

Hyler, said with a feeble show of friendliness, as he held out his hand to Zenas :

“You were right and I in the wrong, as has been proven by the capture of this sloop. I’m sorry I attempted to go contrary to your wishes.”

“That’s all right, lad, now that we’ve succeeded in what I counted on doing from the first moment this vessel hove in sight. Let’s think no more about it, and while we’re running across the bay it won’t be a bad idea if you overhaul the prize to learn what she’s got on board in the way of provisions. Amos and I will look after the sloop.”

Elijah and Reuben went below immediately, as well pleased, perhaps, to be alone together, as were my brother and I.

When Master Cornwall had entered the forward cuddy, and we were at the tiller, Zenas said in a whisper :

“I’m not overly pleased to have that fellow as a comrade ; he’s got such a good opinion of himself and so poor a one of two gawky lads like you and I, that we’re like to be put upon if this crew remains together very long.”

“I’ll answer for it you won’t be put upon to any great extent,” I said with a laugh, and Zenas grinned appreciatively..

“Perhaps not,” he said grimly; “but the time may come when I can’t make him stand aside as easily as I did just now. We surely should get some credit for capturing this sloop, and what is of more value, a British pass.”

“Captain Hyler will be a queer sort of commander if he doesn’t give you a big share of credit for the work. Had I been alone in the shallop with Elijah and Reuben, we’d be hiding on the Jersey shore now, and Simon would be spreading the story that two turn-coats were nearabout in a boat answering to the description of ours. If Clem Parker told the truth——”

“I’ll answer for it he did! A fellow who was so thoroughly frightened couldn’t lie very conveniently!”

“Then it’s certain Simon Hunt hasn’t done very much toward spreading the news that we’ve broken our oath; and I see no reason why we couldn’t even venture into New York City if anything was to be gained by so doing.”

“I reckon we’re not called upon to run our heads into such danger. You seem to forget that the cur lodged information against our family.”

I haven’t forgotten it; but it will require some time for a messenger to go to Oyster Bay, and it may not have been convenient for the British

officer to set out at once in search of father and Moses. I'm counting on being able to get them safe on board this sloop before many hours have passed."

"That must be as Captain Hyler says. While we haven't regularly enlisted, it is much the same thing, and we must stand up to our word with him, else it may be said that we have no friendship for the truth."

By this time Reuben came aft to say that they had found a goodly store of bacon, potatoes and tea in the cuddy, and Zenas suggested that he and Elijah set about getting supper so we could have a bite whenever the opportunity presented itself.

He had no more than gone below again when the first of the whale-boat fleet came in sight, and in order to show that we were friends, Zenas hove the sloop to while I ran up the ratlines and waved my coat.

To our surprise and delight Captain Hyler was on board this boat. As we afterward learned, he had at the last moment decided to follow close behind us lest we should perform our duties in a careless manner, and therefore it was that we lost no time in waiting for new orders.

He appeared considerably surprised at seeing

us in charge of the sloop, and hailed while yet some distance away to learn the reason of our thus having increased the size of his fleet.

Zenas told the story while the captain was pulling alongside, and when our commander clambered over the rail, Reuben, who had come on deck at the first sound of conversation, said, like the honest fellow that he was :

“It is only right, captain, that these two fellows from Flushing should have all the credit of the capture. Had 'Lige and I been allowed our way, we'd been sneaking along shore by this time.”

From that moment I looked upon Reuben Jackson as a comrade whom one could trust implicitly, and he never betrayed my faith in him, although in the days that came we were often in a tight place where he might have done himself a good turn at my expense, when no one could have blamed him severely.

Captain Hyler made no comment : in fact he did nothing more than laugh until Zenas showed him the pass for the Princess, made out in proper form, and then he gave vent to a prolonged whistle, after which he laughed more heartily than usual.

“You boys from Flushing seem cut out for

such work as we count on doing. I knew Nathan Pratt's opinion was to be relied upon ; but had no suspicion that he didn't say enough in your favor. Now we may make the voyage to Oyster Bay in less time than was at first counted on."

"Yes, sir, and it stands Amos and me in hand to get there as soon as possible in order to save our father and brother from becoming acquainted with New York prisons."

"I venture to predict that we'll succeed in so far as their relief goes, and at the same time we may find it convenient to lay hold of the gentleman who can supply us with passes. Run in toward the shore, and we'll soon let the remainder of the crew know in what way our plans are changed."

We stood in, Zenas acting the part of captain even though the commander was on board, until we were well into the mouth of the river, and here we came to anchor just as Reuben announced that he and Elijah had made ready a "smoking hot supper."

One of the whale-boat's crew stood watch on deck while the rest of us went below, and before the meal had come to an end the remainder of Captain Hyler's party were alongside.

Zenas proposed that I take it upon myself

to look after the prisoners, and while my companions were discussing the sudden and welcome change in affairs I went into the hold.

It must be confessed that our captives were not as comfortable as would have been possible; but the liberty—perhaps the lives—of all hands depended upon our holding them securely, and we could not afford to run any risks in order that they might be lodged more after their own ideas.

I dealt out a generous supply of bacon and potatoes, loosening the bonds of each in turn in order that he might have the use of his hands, and all the while Simon Hunt amused himself with the vilest threats regarding what he would do when, as he said “the tables were turned.”

But for the fact that the Tory cur was a prisoner and helpless, I would have repaid his insults by depriving him of food during this evening at least; but to wreak vengeance when he was so wholly in my power would have been the act of a villain.

I contented myself by giving the miserable Tory some good advice which he would have done well to follow, and after the four had been fed and their thirst satisfied, I went on deck, glad to draw in a long breath of fresh air.

While I had been acting the part of jailer the

Princess was gotten under way with two of the whale-boats turned bottom up on deck, all the swivels from the other boats in the hold, and a crew of not less than fifty men lounging around the deck until it was difficult to make one's way forward or aft.

Zenas stood at the tiller, and I went toward him at once eager to learn why we had increased the crew to such an extent.

The whale-boats, with the exception of the two that have been taken on deck, are bound around the island with four men in each," he said in reply to my question. "All the rest of the party are on board ready for anything in the way of adventure which may turn up."

"I reckon we won't have to wait very long for something exciting," I replied grimly. "If we run across a British vessel it is hardly likely our pass, which calls for four men, will be of much avail."

"Don't think, Amos, that Captain Hyler was so thick-headed as not to realize that fact. All hands are to go into the hold when we are in the narrows, and but four will show themselves—you, Captain Hyler, Reuben and I."

"How does it happen that Elijah is counted out?"

“I can’t say for a surety ; but it is easy to guess that the captain doesn’t have perfect confidence in one who would run away at the first sight of a craft like this.”

“Then we’re going to sail boldly past the city ? ”

“Aye, and in the daylight, if it so be the officers of the guard-boats insist upon our waiting. With the pass in our possession we are good Tories, striving to aid the king in ferreting out the rebels who claim a right to the country they have earned by fighting for it against Indians and pirates.”

“There is somewhat of risk in the venture,” I said half to myself, as I thought of all the possibilities.

“Surely you are not growing faint-hearted at a time when everything seems to be working in our favor ? ” he cried in surprise.

“I’m not afraid to make the venture, and would try it if you and I were the only ones aboard the sloop ; but it doesn’t give proof of the coward to look forward a bit. I had rather be prepared for whatsoever may come, by imagining danger, than taken by surprise at the last moment.”

“That’s where you’re right, lad,” a voice from

behind said emphatically, and turning I saw Captain Hyler, who had approached sufficiently near to overhear the conversation. "We must take many chances, engaged in such work as we are ; but the circumstances at present are not very desperate. We can hold our own against any number of Britishers who might come aboard, if such an undertaking was necessary ; but in case your prisoner told the truth, I'm counting that we shall run through without a hitch, save, perhaps, when we shall be ordered to lay alongside one of the men-of-war till morning."

It was good for a fellow's courage to hear the captain speak of what might be before us ; he had a way of convincing a fellow that all was in his favor—not by use of so many words ; but by his tone, bearing, and heartening laugh.

After looking around him a bit, the captain said to Zenas :

"When our crew has been sent below I will take the tiller while you act the part of captain. It may be I can handle the sloop better than you, and certain it is if we are questioned, you or your brother must make the replies, because of my ignorance concerning the good or bad people of Long Island."

Already was the Princess approaching the

narrows. To my great relief our commander set about sending the crew below, ordering every man, under penalty of most severe punishment to remain perfectly quiet, and on the alert to answer his summons, which would be given by stamping his foot on the deck thrice.

“Have your weapons handy, for you will not be called unless needed to take part in a scrimmage, and to wait for other orders than the signal may be a waste of valuable time.”

When the men were finally hidden from view, and the hatchway partially covered with a piece of tarpaulin, Captain Hyler took his station at the tiller. Reuben and I went forward to act as lookouts, and Zenas was left to dispose of himself as fancy dictated.

The breeze was stiff enough to send the Princess along with a bone in her teeth, and I knew that the little sloop could not easily be overhauled save by the swiftest of the king's ships, therefore if it should become necessary to run for it, we might count on escaping.

Excited as I was, it seemed as if our vessel fairly flew over the water, and in a very short time we had a view of his majesty's fleet as it lay before the conquered city.

Reuben, who had pulled to and fro along the

Jersey shore picking up information which might be useful to Captain Hyler, knew well where each ship lay. He pointed out to me the frigates Roebuck, Phœnix, Orpheus, Rose, and Carysfort, and while looking at those enormous ships I said to myself that there was little chance the Americans could ever drive them away. At that moment it was to me as if, by joining those who favored the rebellion, we were but putting the halter around our own necks. I could see no gleam of hope for the Cause.

Then Reuben, who was not troubled by such forebodings as found a place in my mind, showed me the dark form of the prison-ships which had been brought up to receive the unfortunates who were taken during the last battle, and I could well fancy what a despondent crowd of men were fastened beneath the hatches. The poor fellows had been wofully beaten, and were now receiving such punishment as cannot be described and can hardly be imagined.

The lad also explained which portion of the city had so lately been destroyed by fire, and if his information was correct, then the better half of the entire place must have been in ashes at that time.

All the while Reuben was pointing out the dif-

ferent objects well calculated to cause fear, sadness or despair, the Princess was running straight up toward the battery on Bowling Green, seemingly courting attention from the king's fleet, and it was not many moments before we received it.

"Ahoy on the sloop!" was shouted when we were within half a gunshot of the frigate Rose, and Zenas replied:

"Aye, aye, sir."

"What craft is that?"

"The sloop Princess from Flushing, under protection of a pass from Captain Downes."

"Who is Captain Downes? Heave to at once!"

Zenas shouted for the helmsman to bring the sloop around, and the order was obeyed in such a clumsy fashion that we drifted fifty yards or more on the flood tide in advance of the frigate.

"Captain Downes is a native of Flushing; one of the king's recruiting officers, and in command of the Royalists in that section of the island," Zenas explained, determined that the king's officer should have all the information he had asked for.

Then a guard-boat shot around the bow of the frigate, and in a twinkling was alongside, an officer in the stern-sheets holding a lighted lantern as he demanded to see our pass.

Zenas produced it after some search, and said as he handed it over the rail :

“This was shown when we came down, sir, and pronounced correct. Two lads escaped from Flushing, and we set off with all haste to capture them.”

“Did you succeed?” the officer asked with mild interest as he handed the paper back to Zenas.

“No sir ; but it may be that they didn’t come this way as was believed.”

“It’s more likely they’ve joined that rebel Hyler, who is skulkin’ up New Brunswick way, waitin’ till it shall be safe to come out,” the helmsman volunteered, and I trembled at his audacity in thus speaking of himself as if willing to give all the information possible, which was exactly what he most desired.

“This Hyler is one who professes to trade along the coast, and is ever on the alert to injure the king’s loyal subjects, is he not ?”

“Aye, aye, sir, an’ a bigger villain never went unhung.”

“Do you know to a certainty where he is now ?”

“It has been told by those on whom we can rely, that no longer ago than this forenoon he was in New Brunswick, with his boats hauled up

high an' dry, waitin' till it is safe to venture out."

"In which case he may wait a long while, unless we take it into our heads to go after him."

"It might easily be done, sir," the helmsman said eagerly. "A couple of young cutters with a few swivels could get the best of all Hyler's gang, an' without much danger."

By this time the guard-boat was pulling off, and since the officer gave no commands, Zenas asked innocently :

"Are we to go on, sir?"

Then we heard a voice from the deck of the frigate ask :

Did you have a thorough look at the fellow, lieutenant?"

"It's the same craft we overhauled yesterday, sir. I looked him over then, and found nothing. Shall he proceed to Flushing?"

"If you are satisfied, let him go."

Captain Hyler did not wait for orders, but flung the sloop's bow around by aid of the mainsail, and we sailed slowly on past the Carysfort so near that I could readily have tossed a biscuit aboard.

We had passed the first line of the fleet ; but before us were the prison-ships, the officers of

which might take a notion to bring us to, and since it was not likely they had previously overhauled the Princess, we might speedily find that we had gotten out of the frying-pan into the fire.

“Captain Hyler will pull us through all right,” Reuben said to me when we were well on our course once more. “I’ve seen him in some mighty tight places, and he never so much as turned a hair. When you’ve served under him three months, as I have done, sneaking past the British fleet at night won’t seem anything very difficult.”

I was willing to admit all my companion said in favor of the captain ; but the thought that we were yet to sail near the fortifications, and close by the prison-ships, caused a certain chill to creep up my spine.

I could not believe that Zenas and I might pass these danger-points twice without coming to harm, and was saying to myself that it was not well to crow until we were well clear of the woods, when we heard a hail dead ahead.

“Ahoy there !” came from a small boat almost directly under our bow.

“Who is it ?” Zenas cried, coming forward and leaning over the rail.

“Guard-boat from the Good Hope. Up with your helm, you lubber, or you’ll run us down !”

“Mind your eye, Clem Parker !” Zenas cried as if in anger. “Put your helm up till I show the pass.”

“Who gave you a pass to run up here in the night ?” a voice from the boat cried.

“Captain Downes of Flushing. We are out in search of Whigs, and came down here yesterday. The captain of the Rose just told us to keep on toward home.”

“You can’t do anything of the kind. Let go your anchor, and we’ll have a look at you in the morning !”

CHAPTER V.

CONTRARY TO ORDERS.

I WAS not surprised when we were thus brought up with a sharp turn by the officer of the guard-boat from the prison-ship Good Hope. We had been sliding along so smoothly that I had fully expected something of the kind, for such progress with the chances so decidedly against us was what might almost have been called "unnatural."

At the moment my single regret was that we had not been stopped by one of the frigates of Bowling Green, when there would have been no less than three roads for escape if we were like to come to grief. From there we could have pulled up the Hudson River, run back through the narrows, or taken chances in the city itself, if flight became possible, whereas, under the lee of the prison-ship we were cornered, so to speak, like a rat. There was no way in which to flee, unless one was so foolish as to run the risk of going ashore on Long Island where Tories were

thicker than flies in August, more especially since the Britishers had won the battle.

All these thoughts passed through my mind in the merest fraction of time, and I had drawn my own conclusions by the time Zenas shouted, responsive to the officer's orders :

“ Clear away that cable, you clumsy farmers ! Bend on the hawser, an' make certain of givin' her scope enough ! ”

The helmsman came running forward as if frightened by the angrily spoken commands of our captain, and when I would have let the anchor go, he pulled me back ; but all the while advising that this or that be done, until it was as if we three did not know how to perform that which would have been a simple task for any fellow who had never before been on shipboard.

“ Can't you understand that we don't want to do the work in a hurry,” Captain Hyler whispered to me when I, with perhaps a show of irritation, would have hove the light anchor over the rail.

Not until I had glanced toward the light of the prison-ship did I realize what might be effected by pretended ignorance. The flood tide was carrying us up river away from the enemy, and every moment spent in fumbling with the

cable insured us a greater distance from the Britishers.

Only then did I understand that it was not Captain Hyler's intention to remain at anchor until morning, even though orders to that effect had been given by our masters, and straightway I became so clumsy as not to know the difference between the jib halliards and the main sheet.

"Let go your anchor!" the officer in the guard-boat shouted angrily. "Let go, or I'll fire."

"In the name of mercy, captain, hold on till we can clear this cable!" Captain Hyler cried in pretended terror. These Flushing farmers have snarled it till you can't tell one end from the other!"

"Send some of your men on board to straighten matters, lieutenant!" a voice from the prison ship cried, and then it was that we let go the anchor with a splash, having carried the joke as far as it was safe, for we would speedily come to grief if British sailors should board us.

The trick proved more of a success than I had believed possible; thanks to Captain Hyler's ready wit the Princess had drifted half a musket-shot away from the gloomy prison-ship, and by giving ample scope to the cable she would ride so far from the enemy that the bloody-backs, as

some called the Britishers, could not see in the gloom what might be taking place on our deck.

“She’s all right now, an’ when the tide turns we can come up a bit nearer if you like,” Captain Hyler cried to the officer in the boat, and he replied in a temper :

“Stay where you are ; and be careful not to get any further off. We don’t want you running foul of us, as would most likely happen if you shifted anchorage,” and he added as if to himself, “I wonder how such a set of lubbers have run their craft thus far up the river without coming to grief !”

We could just distinguish the shape of the guard-boat as she pulled in alongside the prison-ship, and when all was quiet again Captain Hyler sent Reuben below to let the men know what had happened to interfere with the voyage.

“You don’t count on lying here a great while ?” Zenas whispered, and our commander replied :

“We’d better hold on a couple of hours ; by the end of that time they’ll conclude we are willing to obey orders. There wouldn’t be any great risk of slipping the cable at once ; but there’s no need of taking chances while matters are going our way.”

Then we three remained silent and motionless until Reuben came on deck again, and immediately he appeared Captain Hyler whispered to him :

“Go back and tell the boys that they are to make ready for getting the shallop on deck when we uncover the hatch. Let them understand that we’re to make a run for it, and I count on getting all three of the boats into the water if chase should be made.”

“Meaning that we will abandon the sloop if hard pressed,” I said, unconsciously speaking my thoughts.

“Exactly. There’s little fear but that we can give them the slip in the boats, even though the wind dies away ; but if it can be done without much risk, we’ll hold on to the sloop a while longer.”

After he thus spoke we remained silent, watching the prison-ship until it was only with the greatest difficulty I could force my eyes to remain open. The darkness, and the sougling of the wind through the rigging was enough to lull the sharpest watcher to slumber.

It seemed to me that we had remained at anchor no less than four hours, and I was looking for that gray light which precedes the coming of

day, when Captain Hyler gave the first sign of life.

“I reckon the time has come to disobey orders,” he whispered. “One of you lads will cut the hawser with his knife, taking good care not to let the end fall into the water in such manner as to make a noise, and so long as the sloop drifts in the middle of the river we’ll leave her alone ; but all hands must be ready to sail on the instant ! Rube Jackson, tell Howland and Morse to send up the shallop.”

I went forward without waiting for further command, and with the knife such as all seamen wear at their heels, began sawing at the stout manila cable, smiling to myself as I thought that Captain Downes might be called upon to pay for the tackle we were about to abandon.

We could hear the footfalls of the sentries on the prison-ship as they kept guard over the poor wretches who were confined between decks ; but never a word of conversation came from that direction, therefore it was reasonable to believe that if any officers were on duty they were taking it comfortably in the cabin.

Never before had I come across a piece of manila rope that so stoutly resisted the edge of a knife. In my excitement it seemed as if I had worked a

full half hour before the strands separated, and I felt rather than heard the end slip into the water.

We had come up the bay on the young flood, and the tide would set in our favor for an hour or more longer, therefore we had nothing to do save wait in breathless excitement until we were borne out of sight in the gloom, or brought to by a gun from the ship.

I could see dimly that two men had come up from the hold and were standing like shadows by the main halliards. Some one was at the rail a few feet from me, with the jib halliards in his hands, and toward this figure I crept softly.

It was Zenas, and he clasped my hand as I stood by his side with a nervous grip which told that his excitement was quite as great as my own.

We gazed intently at the outlines of the ship which gradually became less and less distant, and expecting each instant to see the flash of cannon proclaiming that we must submit as prisoners.

“Suppose they open on us?” I said half to myself, and Zenas replied cheerily :

“Now that we’ve gained such a distance on them, I reckon we could slip over the sloop’s rail before much mischief was done. The men in the

hold would make quick work of launching the boats."

Already were we at such a distance that only with difficulty could I distinguish the outlines of the ship's rigging against the sky, and my heart leaped exultantly as I realized that the breeze was increasing as the morning drew nigh. Even now we might win the chase, should one be begun, and I looked upon our escape as certain.

Then it was no longer possible to see even the form of the ship; but the sloop was swinging nearer the New York shore than was pleasing, for I knew the current would carry us into Kip's Bay where was a fort, with a force of British most likely occupying it since the American army had been obliged to retreat.

"You had better tell Captain Hyler that we are drifting too near the fortifications." I whispered, and Zenas started aft, saying before he left me :

"Don't lose any time in running up the jib after the word is given."

"He must have suddenly gotten the idea that I was a fool, for under the circumstances even a snail would have moved lively if he knew that a British prison was ready to receive him in case the slightest blunder or delay was made.

Five minutes later the word was passed forward in whispers to make sail, and we did our best to effect the object noiselessly ; but despite all our efforts the hoops rasped on the spar until it seemed to me that the enemy anywhere within a mile would be made aware of what we were doing.

The Britishers must have been sleeping soundly, confident the Yankees could do them no mischief now that General Washington had been so signally defeated, otherwise we would have had a swarm of them about our ears before the Princess was brought around on her course.

Once that had been done, however, and she forged ahead aided by both tide and wind, I knew beyond reasonable doubt that we had made good our escape ; for even though they should come in pursuit now, not a man of them could make his way through Hell Gate without a pilot, and Zenas was able to run our craft down the turbulent waters, never grazing the smallest rock even in the darkness.

The boatmen who had been so long confined in the dark hold were allowed to come on deck, and away we sped rejoicing in having come safely past all the British obstructions in New York Bay and harbor.

The deck of the Princess was literally thronged with men, and there was no good reason why I should feel obliged to remain on duty when twenty pairs of hands were ready to execute any order which might be given. Zenas was at the tiller, and knowing the sloop was in good hands so long as he remained there, I went into the hold to make certain the prisoners were unable to effect an escape.

Simon Hunt was very humble now, after having seen what a crew we carried, and did not so much as venture an abusive word. On the contrary, he begged that I would loosen the rope a bit in order to ease the strain on his wrists ; but this I did not deem it wise to do.

Then he tried cajoling me, declaring that he had not intended to work either Zenas or me any harm ; but was only playing a joke, all of which showed that he either took me for a big fool, or was a bigger one himself.

“I suppose it was a part of the same joke when you lodged information with Colonel Emerick against our family?” I asked sharply, whereupon the villainous Tory declared that he had done nothing of the kind.

“Captain Downes may have sent express to Oyster Bay ; but I had no hand in it,” he said.

“Clem Parker has lied all the way through, in order to work a spite on me.”

I would not stop to bandy words with the fellow, for I knew he was saying that which had in it no word of truth, and, again making certain the ropes which bound the precious crew had not been tampered with, went on deck.

My stay in the hold must have been longer than I believed, for on coming into the open air I saw that the new day was just breaking. We had sailed in safety over the rapids, and fair before us lay the entrance to Flushing Bay.

Now was come the time when Captain Hyler might do us, meaning Zenas and myself, a good turn if he was so disposed. He was bound for Oyster Bay, yet by delaying a few hours we might run in to Flushing, take on board my parents and Moses, and thus spare them great suffering and Zenas and I much distress of mind, unless, by some misadventure, their arrest had already been accomplished.

All this I suggested to Zenas, and he immediately repeated it to the captain with more force of argument than I would have dared to use. He spoke of what we two had already done, in thus saving a long voyage around the island by capturing the sloop, and bound himself and me to

any task whatsoever that the captain might choose to put upon us as the price of making the detour necessary to aid our parents.

The only reason why he hesitated to call in at Flushing was that by so doing Colonel Emerick, whom he hoped to capture, might be warned of our whereabouts ; but this seemed to me a trifling argument, and I said with no little warmth :

“It is as worthy a deed to save two good men from what would be worse than death in a British prison, as to capture half a dozen redcoats when you must be put to considerable inconvenience to hold them securely.”

“By having them in our possession we can effect an exchange, and for an officer as high in rank as a lieutenant-colonel, we can demand many good men of ours,” the captain said as if to himself, and Zenas added :

“It is not certain that by making the attempt to aid my father, mother and brother, Colonel Emerick will be warned. If the wind holds good we should be in Oyster Bay before word can be sent there overland, and you have no proof that the people of Flushing will consider it necessary to spread the news, other than in the direction of New York.”

“Say no more about it, lad,” Captain Hyler

interrupted. "We'll have a try for your people, whatever comes of it, and if the task proves to have been ill-advised, we shall have the satisfaction of knowing that we erred in a good cause."

I could have hugged him at that moment, so great was my joy; but a few seconds later my rejoicing was turned to apprehension, for I had good reason to fear that our loved ones had already been taken away.

"Don't let your mind dwell on what may be; but think only that in no other way could we have returned home so quickly and with such a force at our backs," Zenas said soothingly when he saw that I was disturbed. "Fortune has been with us thus far, and we will count on pulling through all right."

Half an hour later I began to think that we were especially favored by Providence, for then it was that we sighted a small whale-boat under sail, and coming directly away from Flushing.

Both Zenas and I knew that those residents of Flushing who owned such a craft were all Tories, and it seemed necessary we should learn who were on board.

I called Captain Hyler's attention to the fact, and urged him to intercept the boat by declaring that in so doing he would, perhaps, be able to cap-

ture prisoners of as much consequence as a colonel in the British army.

It was not necessary to use many words ; he realized at once, in view of what both Zenas and I had said, how important it might be to have a look at the occupants, and the Princess was headed directly toward the strangers.

Whoever was at the helm of the whale-boat must have believed there were no enemies in the vicinity, for not the slightest attempt was made to give us the slip, and before many moments had passed Zenas and I gave vent to a cry of joy.

The man at the helm was none other than Captain Downes, and he had as passenger our parents and brother ! We could see Moses distinctly as he lay in the bow tied hand and foot. Father was on the forward thwart in quite as helpless a condition, while my poor mother sat by his side, most likely trying to soothe his mental as well as bodily pain.

We two, Zenas and I, had arrived just in the nick of time, and Captain Hyler would have the satisfaction of making prisoner one who held a commission from the king.

I could have cried from very joy as I realized what would have been the result had we not arrived just there at that particular time, and knew

that it was impossible the villainous Tory, who was ready to do any dirty work in the name of his majesty, could now escape us.

He had but one man to aid him in working the boat, and the breeze held so strong that he could not hope to give us the slip even had the Princess been a duller sailer than she was.

Of a verity Simon Hunt had done us a good turn even while trying to work the most deadly injury.

Captain Hyler advised Zenas and I to remain out of sight, and sent the greater number of the men into the hold. This he did, not because he feared for an instant the boat could escape him ; but that the shortest time possible should be spent in the capture.

“ We shall be doing as you wished, and yet not taking any chances of allowing the Britishers in Oyster Bay to suspect that we are here,” he said with a laugh. “ I had counted on being delayed not less than four and twenty hours ; but now we will have wasted no more than sixty minutes.”

Crouching behind the rail where one of the planks had been slightly stove, the aperture serving us as a peep-hole, Zenas and I saw all that took place.

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Captain Downes, most likely thinking Simon Hunt and his crew were still in possession of the Princess, came boldly up until he saw a stranger at the tiller, and then he would have sheered off ; but Captain Hyler cried out to the men forward :

“Let two of you take good aim with your muskets at the helmsman of yonder craft, and at the first attempt to put about, send a couple of bullets into his head. We have no time to waste on the king’s servants !”

The Tory actually turned green with fear and rage, and I noted with the most intense satisfaction the look of joy which came over the faces of the prisoners, for they knew by the words that friends were near at hand.

A veritable coward was his majesty’s officer of Flushing, save when he was arresting helpless women or children with a large force at his back, and I knew full well that he would not risk his precious life in any attempt at escape.

When the whale-boat was within a dozen yards, and our two men stood with muskets leveled at the Tory’s head, Zenas and I rose to our feet, waving our hats as we shouted again and again for very joy.

Mother turned pale at seeing us ; but father and Moses replied to our shouts like men who



"Let two of you take good aim with your muskets at the helmsman of yonder craft."--Page 100.

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wonder, for if the rescue had not been effected those poor creatures would have been thrown into jail, and none but those who have suffered thus at the hands of the British can understand all the horrors of such imprisonment.

Captain Downes and his crew of one man were trussed up carefully by us, and put into the hold to keep Simon and his comrades company. The whale-boat was made fast astern, and while Zenas and I were eagerly embracing our loved ones for at least the tenth time, the Princess was headed on the course to Oyster Bay.

CHAPTER VI.

BRITISH PRISONERS.

AT this point, and lest it be thought that I have been making a great ado about British prisons when they were no worse than other places of confinement all over the world, I propose to set down that which was written concerning them by one who had ample reason to know exactly what they were like.

That which I copy here was written a dozen years after the colonies declared they would be free and independent, therefore in the writing of it there can be no personal hatreds nor desire for revenge. I set it down at this point in order that the reader shall understand as fully as I did at the time, how much of suffering which was absolutely needless the king's minions caused us "rebels."

The capture of Fort Washington, November 16th, threw nearly twenty-seven hundred prisoners into the hands of the British. To these must be added over one thousand taken at the

battle of Brooklyn, and such private citizens as were arrested for their political principles in the vicinity of New York City and on Long Island, and we may safely conclude that Sir William Howe had at least five thousand prisoners, to provide for. The sudden influx of so many prisoners, the recent capture of the city, and the unlooked-for conflagration of a fourth part of it, threw his affairs into such confusion that, from those circumstances alone, the prisoners must have suffered much from want of food and other bodily comforts ; but there was added the studied cruelty of Captain Cunningham, the Provost Marshal, and his deputies, and the criminal negligence of Sir William Howe. To contain such a vast number of prisoners the ordinary places of confinement were insufficient. Accordingly the Brick Church, the Middle Dutch and the North Dutch churches were appropriated to their use. Besides these, Columbia College, the sugar-house, the new jail, the new Bridewell, and the city hall were filled to their utmost capacity.

“ The sugar-house stood in Liberty Street south of the Middle Dutch church, a dark stone building with small, deep, port-hole looking windows, rising tier above tier, exhibiting a dungeon-like aspect. It was five stories high, and each story

was divided into two dreary apartments. There was a strong, jail-like door opening on Liberty Street, and another on the southeast, descending into a dismal cellar, also used as a prison. There was a walk nearly broad enough for a cart to travel around it, where, night and day, two British or Hessian guards paced their weary rounds. The yard was surrounded by a close board fence, nine feet high. In the suffocating heat of summer I have seen every narrow aperture of those stone walls filled with human heads, face above face, seeking a portion of the external air. While the jail fever was raging in the summer of 1777, the prisoners were let out in companies of twenty, for half an hour at a time, to breathe fresh air. Inside they were so crowded that they divided their numbers into squads of six each, and every squad was allowed in turn to stand by the window ten minutes at a time. Seats there were none, and their beds were but straw, intermixed with vermin. For many weeks the dead-cart visited the prison every morning, into which from eight to twelve corpses were flung and piled up like sticks of wood, and dumped into ditches in the outskirts of the city.

“The North Dutch church was made to hold eight hundred prisoners ; its pews were ripped out

and used for fuel ; its pulpit was sent to London, and a floor laid across from one gallery to the other.

“In the Middle Dutch church the prisoners taken on Long Island and at Fort Washington, sick, wounded and well, were all indiscriminately huddled together by hundreds and thousands ; large numbers of whom died by disease, and many were undoubtedly poisoned by inhuman attendants for the sake of their watches or silver buckles. Soon afterwards it was turned into a riding school to train dragoon horses. The floor was taken up, and the ground covered with tan bark. A pole ran across the middle, for the horses to leap over.

“The Brick Church was at first a prison, but soon it and other buildings were converted into hospitals.

“The new Bridewell was for a time used as a prison for American soldiers. Oliver Woodruff, who was taken prisoner at Fort Washington, says regarding it : ‘We were marched to New York, and went to different prisons—eight hundred and sixteen were sent to the new Bridewell, I among the number. On Thursday morning they brought us a little provision, which was the first morsel we got to eat or drink after eating our breakfast on Saturday morning. We never drew as much

provision for three days' allowance as a man would eat at a common meal. I was there three months during that inclement season, and never saw any fire except what was in the lamps of the city. There was not a pane of glass in the windows, and nothing to keep out the cold except the iron gates."

"The new jail, or the Provost, was destined for more notorious rebels, civil, naval and military. An admission into this modern bastile was enough to appal the stoutest heart. On the right hand of the main door was Captain Cunningham's quarters ; opposite to which was the guard-room. Within the first barricade was Sergeant O'Keefe's apartment. At the entrance two sentinels were always posted, by day and night. Two more at the first and second barricades, which were grated barred and chained ; the same number were stationed at the rear door, on the platform at the grated door, and at the foot of the second flight of steps leading to the rooms and cells on the second and third stories.

"When a prisoner, escorted by soldiers, was led into the hall the entire guard was paraded, and he was delivered over with all formality to Captain Cunningham or his deputy. What with the bristling of arm, unbolting of bars and locks,

clanking of enormous chains, and a vestibule as dark as Erebus, the unfortunate captive might well shrink under this sight and parade of tyrannical power as he crossed the threshold of that door which possibly closed on him for life."

Now let me set down the stories of some of my friends who were so unfortunate as to have experience in those pest holes, which suited the British well, because in them the prisoners died rapidly.

"Lieutenant Robert Troup, with several other officers, was made prisoner on the 27th day of August in the year of Independence, on Long Island. They were carried before the generals, interrogated and threatened to be hung. Thence they were led to a house near Flatbush. Next morning they were taken in the rear of the army in Bedford. Eighteen officers were confined in one small tent for two days and three nights, and it rained nearly all the time. Here it was that Provost Marshal Cunningham visited the prisoners, bringing with him a negro who carried a halter, telling them that the negro had already hung several, and he imagined he would hang some more. The negro was allowed to insult the prisoners by threatening them with the halter, and the British officers called them such names

as scoundrels, robbers and murderers. From Bedford they were marched to Flatbush, and confined a week in Mr. Leffert's house, on short allowance of biscuit and salt pork. Several Hessian soldiers took pity on them, and gave them apples. After spending a week at Flatbush they were put on board a transport without bedding or blankets, and neither soap nor fresh water given them for washing. They drank and cooked with the filthy water brought from England. After six weeks of such life they were put into the Bridewell. At first they were not allowed any fuel, and afterwards, only a little coal for three days in the week. Provisions were dealt out very negligently, in scanty quantity, and of bad quality. Most of the prisoners would have died but from the aid received from the poor people of the city."

A lad who lived in Flushing, and had been informed against by no less a person than Simon Hunt, told me that while he lay in Bridewell accused of no crime, and having made no attempt whatever to join the colonists, he had no food from Saturday morning until Monday night. Then rations for three days were served, these same consisting of half a pound of biscuit, half a pound of pork, half pint peas, half gill rice, half ounce of butter, all of which he could have eaten

in one meal. They had neither hay nor straw to lie upon, and only one small cart-load of fuel for eight hundred men. At nine o'clock in the evening the Hessian guards would come in and put out the fire, laying on the poor prisoners with heavy clubs because they were sitting around it. These wretches died like rotten sheep, with cold, hunger and dirt. It was only those who had good clothes to sell that managed to buy so much bread as was necessary to keep them alive.

And nearly all of this terrible distress was directly chargeable to that scoundrel, Captain Cunningham, who, some years later when he was about to be hanged in London for having committed forgery, made a confession of which the following is a portion :

“I embarked at Newry in the ship Needham, for New York, and arrived at that port the 4th day of August, 1774, with some indented servants I had kidnapped in Ireland ; but they were liberated in New York on account of the bad usage they had received from me during the passage. In that city I used the profession of breaking horses and teaching ladies and gentlemen to ride ; but, rendering myself obnoxious to the citizens in their infant struggle for freedom, I was obliged to fly on board the Asia man-of-war, and from thence

to Boston, where my own opposition to the measures pursued by the Americans in support of their rights, was the first thing that recommended me to the notice of General Gage; and when the war commenced I was appointed Provost Marshal to the Royal army, which placed me in a situation to wreak my vengeance on the Americans. I shudder to think of the murders I have been accessory to, both with and without orders from Government, especially while in New York, during which time there were more than two thousand prisoners starved in the different churches, by stopping their rations, which I sold. There were also two hundred and seventy-five American prisoners and obnoxious persons executed, out of all which number there were only about one dozen public executions, which chiefly consisted of British and Hessian deserters. The mode for private executions was thus conducted: A guard was despatched from the Provost about half-past twelve at night, to the Barrack Street and the neighborhood of the upper barracks, to order the people to shut their window shutters, and put out their lights, forbidding them at the same time to presume to look out of their windows and doors on pain of death. After which the unfortunate prisoners were conducted,

gagged, just behind the upper barracks and hung without ceremony, and there buried by the black pioneer of the Provost."

So much as that the brute Cunningham confessed to, and I believe he did not tell all the truth even then.

A friend of my father's who was forced to live in New York during that terrible time because he could not get a pass to leave, told me that Cunningham often hung five or six in one night, and that the women of the neighborhood, pained by the prisoners' cries for mercy, petitioned Howe to have this practise discontinued.

While I am on this mournful subject, which is set forth that others may know how we who served the cause of liberty were tortured, it is well that I give the stories of one or two unfortunates who were confined on the prison-ship, where the suffering was greater, if that could be possible, than on shore, because they did not die so quickly. But first, however, that I may not be accused of saying what is not true, I will give the official report concerning the prisoners which was made by the worthy Master Pintard :

He wrote to General Jones, "close confined in jail without distinction of rank or character, amongst felons (a number of whom are under

sentence of death), without their friends being suffered to speak to them, even through grates. On the scanty allowance of two pounds each of hard biscuit and raw pork per man per week, without fuel to dress it. Frequently supplied with water from a pump where all kinds of filth is thrown that can render it obnoxious and unwholesome, when good water is easily obtained. Denied the benefit of a hospital, not allowed to send for medicine, nor even a doctor permitted to see them when in the greatest distress; married men and others who lay at the point of death, refused to have their wives or relations admitted to see them, and for attempting it often beat from the prison. Commissioned officers and other persons of character, without a cause, thrown into a loathsome dungeon, insulted in a gross manner, and vilely abused by a Provost Marshal who is allowed to be one of the basest characters in the British army, and whose power is so unlimited that he has caned an officer on a trivial occasion, and frequently beats the sick privates when unable to stand."

General Washington himself knew how the people were abused; but was powerless to prevent it. I have seen the copy of a letter which he wrote to Sir William Howe two months after Zenas

and I joined Captain Hyler's navy, and in it he said, regarding those who were prisoners aboard the ships :

“I hope the miseries of cold, disease, and famine may not be added to their other misfortunes. You may call us rebels, and say we deserve no better treatment, but remember we have feelings keen and sensible as loyalists, and will retaliate on the unjust invaders of our rights, liberties and properties. My injured countrymen have long called on me to obtain redress to their grievances. I am sorry I am again under the necessity of remonstrating to you on the treatment which our prisoners continue to receive in New York. Those who have lately been sent out give the most shocking accounts of their barbarous usage, which their miserable, emaciated countenances confirm. If a real scarcity of provisions and fuel at this inclement season is the cause that our prisoners are debarred from them, common humanity points out a mode, which is, to suffer them to go home under parole, not to serve during the war, or until an equal number are released by us. Most of the prisoners who have returned home have informed me they were offered better treatment provided they would enlist in your service.”

Three months after we joined Captain Hyler he made the following report to the American commander in Newburgh :

“A cartel lately carried one hundred and thirty-six prisoners from the prison-ships in New York to New London. Such was the condition in which these poor creatures were put aboard the cartel, that in the short run sixteen died on board ; and sixty, when they landed, were scarcely able to move, while the remainder were greatly emaciated. The greatest inhumanity was experienced in a ship of which one Nelson, a Scotchman, had the superintendence. Upwards of three hundred were confined at a time on board. There was but one small fireplace to cook the food of such a number. The allowance was, moreover, frequently delayed. In the short days of November and December it was not begun to be served till three o'clock. At sunset the fire was ordered to be quenched, therefore some had not their food dressed at all ; many were obliged to eat it half raw. No flour, oatmeal, and things of like nature, suited to the condition of infirm people, were allowed to the many sick—nothing but ship-bread, beef and pork.”

Ben Seabury, a lad from Flushing, succeeded in getting a letter to his people by throwing it

overboard when a trading boat laid alongside, and in it he wrote with a pine stick and soot mixed with water :

“I am now a prisoner on board the ship Falmouth, in New York harbor, a place the most dreadful ; we are confined so that we have not room even to lie down all at once to sleep. It is the most horrible hole that can be thought of. I was sick, and longed for some clear water while I lay unpitied at death’s door with a putrid fever, and though I had money I was not permitted to send for it. I offered repeatedly a hard dollar for a pint. The wretch who went backward and forward would not oblige me. I am just able to creep about. Four prisoners have escaped from this ship.”

It was my purpose, when I began this sickening account of what our people suffered at the hands of the British, to set down the story of many poor fellows as I had the horrible tales from their own lips ; but such a record almost frightens me at this late day, although for many months I was in the midst of the terror.

What is here related will suffice to show why we who remained at liberty were ready to risk life in the effort to aid our friends, and why the fear of capture was greater than that of death.

Surely the small portion of the picture I have here represented will be enough, and from this time out our motives at such times as we fought against the king, will be the better understood.

Now, having strayed so far from the story of what we Dunkels did while in the whale-boat navy, I will go back to that happy meeting with my parents after the Princess was steering a course for Oyster Bay, having lost less than a single hour in accomplishing what was so dear to Zenas' heart and mine.

Moses told us, while father and mother were talking with Captain Hyler, all that had happened after we left home, and the story ran much like this :

Simon made a great ado about our having gone to join the American army, and spread the news from one end of the town to the other, with many embellishments of his own which, as may well be imagined, were very far from the truth. He lost no time in sending express to Colonel Emerick to lodge information against us, and also insisted that Captain Downes have an eye over our family lest they escape.

Then, with all due authority, he impressed the sloop Princess, as Clem Parker had said, and came in pursuit of us to his cost.

From the moment of his departure our home was closely watched, and even had its inmates been eager to do so, they could not have escaped from the town. But father had no idea of pleasing the Tories by trying to run away when he knew failure awaited the venture ; it was better, so he declared, to be made prisoner while in his own house and innocent of any crime against the king, than to be taken as a fugitive, when the fact of his trying to gain the American lines would give ample evidence against him.

Therefore it was that our family remained quietly at home, suffering much agony of mind lest we should be captured by Simon and his companions, until this very morning when we had so opportunely come to their rescue. An hour before daylight Captain Downes and a squad of men entered the dwelling, and, without allowing our parents to take anything whatsoever from their home, marched them down to the landing, where they were bound and put on board the boat which was then being towed behind the Princess.

Captain Downes, believing that all those who served the cause of liberty had followed the American army in its retreat, anticipated no difficulty in carrying his captives to New York,

and when they set out, he, never a whit ashamed of making prisoner of a woman, threatened all hands with the fate which awaited them at their journey's end.

The scoundrelly Tory amused himself with flinging at them, while they were helpless, every abusive word which came to his tongue's end, and had not ceased when the Princess hove in sight.

He was certain Simon and his followers were yet in command of the sloop, and had returned successful, therefore, while approaching to offer congratulations to the cur who was supposed to have captured us, he amused himself by depicting our condition in jail, ashore or on board one of the filthy prison-ships.

I promised myself, long before Moses' story had come to an end, that I would repay in some slight degree Captain Downes for his insults, and directly my brother had finished his recital I went below to have a look at the prisoners.

A more sorry lot of knaves I never saw. They had evidently given each other an account of their misadventures, and when I came upon them all hands looked around apprehensively, as if believing it was in my mind to make reprisals.

Then I suddenly became ashamed of myself for

having even so much as thought of abusing prisoners. That was a work with which an honest man would not soil either his hands or his conscience, and without so much as speaking I turned away, whereupon Simon asked sulkily if they were to have breakfast.

“When we come to an end of this voyage you will be fed ; but until then you must content yourselves with the memory of last night’s supper,” I replied, finding it hard to keep my temper within bounds.

“Then we are to be starved,” he cried fiercely.

“In the British jails and ships American prisoners are forced to live three days on what would suffice for a single meal, and it won’t do you and your following any harm if you do not smell food again until nightfall. As for Captain Downes, I reckon he ate heartily before setting out on the dangerous mission of capturing a woman who was ever ready to serve her neighbors to the best of her ability when they were in need.”

With this fling, which must have cut if the Tory had anything in the shape of a heart, because less than a year previous my mother had nursed him while he lay ill with a fever, I went on deck again.

CHAPTER VII.

OYSTER BAY.

As I went aft I found father at the tiller, and Captain Hyler talking earnestly with Moses and Zenas, whereupon, thinking they might have a secret which was not for me to share, I turned away, but the captain called out that he wished to speak with me.

When I was come within earshot he said with a more hearty laugh than usual :

“Your father and brother have cast in their lot with us, Amos, and I am just proposing that you four be detailed to one boat. The shallop we’ll carry away with us, if it so be we are not captured by Colonel Emerick’s men ; but she is too light a craft for our work, therefore we’ll leave her in a safe place later, and put you Dunkels in one of the whale-boats, detailing six others to make up the crew. Were you satisfied with Reuben and Elijah ?”

“Reuben would make a good comrade ; but I’m not overly well pleased with Elijah’s display

of courage," I replied, not minded to say anything harsh against the timorous lad ; but determined that he should not be near at hand to interfere with plans of ours if words of mine could prevent it.

"I will see to it that you have companions who can match you for spirit. When we have met the fleet, you Dunkels shall take your choice of boats, and, as a matter of course, your father will act as captain. He has been explaining to me the situation of the town, and Colonel Emerick's quarters ; but much to my surprise, I learn that a guard-ship has been stationed at the mouth of the bay."

"A guard-ship !" I cried in astonishment. "When did she come ?"

"Yesterday, so we were told," Moses replied.

"How large a craft might she be ?"

"A small schooner with a force of ten men."

I looked around at the throng which crowded the deck of the Princess till they were treading on each others' heels, and Captain Hyler had another laughing spell.

"You are thinking that with a party like ours her crew would be of little value when it comes to stopping us, eh ?"

"There is in my mind something of the kind,"

I replied, wondering how he was able to read my thoughts so readily.

“You Dunkels are not lacking in courage,” the captain said in a tone of satisfaction, “and together we will have some bravedoings before the bloody-backs are driven out of New York by General Washington. I am not minded, however, to risk a squabble with the guard-ship before we have paid Colonel Emerick a visit, lest he take alarm and leave town. After we have finished our business will be time enough to find out the disposition of those who would guard Oyster Bay from harm. It has been arranged, between your father and myself, that before the sloop rounds yonder point all the men save you four will go into the hold. Your mother is already in the after cuddy, and will remain there until we can leave her in a place of safety. You four will sail the Princess in, answering to the hail of the guard-ship, if she hails, and rely upon Simon Hunt’s pass to give you free entrance.”

As a matter of course I had no reply to make to this information ; the plan had been arranged with my father, and that was quite as much as I needed to know.

“Does the program please you ? ” he asked after a pause.

“Anything pleases me, sir, so long as we accomplish what is set us to do. It can make but little difference whether I am agreeable to this or that plan of attack.”

“That is where you mistake, lad,” the captain said heartily. “After you and Zenas have accomplished so much, I’m disposed to look to you and yours for advice.”

It goes without saying that such speech tickled my vanity, and I puffed myself up yet further by saying, as if I was an old hand at this work of making war against the king :

“It makes little difference whether we take the guard-ship before or after visiting the village, so far as I’m concerned, because it can be done equally well at any time.”

“That’s the kind of talk I like to hear. Lads who are confident a task can be accomplished, have already more than half succeeded. Sooner or later, as it suits our purpose, we’ll look after the guard-ship, and now it may be well to clear the decks. Your brothers will explain what part you four are to play once we arrive off the town.”

While the captain was sending the men into the hold, and otherwise giving to the deck of the Princess a peaceful look, I asked Zenas if we

were to take any very important part in this capture of the Britisher.

“We four, together with about twenty others, are to make our way to Colonel Emerick’s headquarters as rapidly as possible after getting ashore, paying no attention to whatever may be going on around us. The captain is to dispose of the other men in such manner that they will guard us, or hold back any rush which may be made. We are to take the Britisher if possible, and hurry on board again immediately, leaving the captain’s party to do the most of the fighting until after our prisoner is in the hold.”

“Who will care for the sloop while we are ashore?” I asked, thinking that Simon Hunt might find opportunity during our absence to make his escape.

“It is agreed that four men should be able to hold the craft against an ordinary attack, for two swivels will be mounted in the bow, and with such weapons the Tories who would naturally be found in a town like Huntington, can be kept at a respectful distance.”

There was no good reason why I should not believe that any four of our crew could take proper care of the prisoners in the hold, and yet I was to a certain degree disturbed in mind at

the thought of leaving Simon Hunt in the keeping of another.

Although I was proud of having been selected as a member of the party which was to capture the Britisher, it would have pleased me better, just at that moment, had I been detailed to look after the sloop while the crew was ashore.

However, I could have given no good reason why the prisoners would be more secure in my care rather than in another's, and speedily I forgot my misgivings as we three lads discussed the proposed venture.

We knew full well that it promised in the way of danger all the most greedy fire-eater could have desired. The people of Oyster Bay were, as a rule, Tories, and there was no doubt but that they would fly to the aid of their king's representative in such numbers that we could not safely set them down as less than twenty. The colonel would have certain subordinate officers and British or Hessian soldiers—say ten in all. In addition to these thirty enemies it was reasonable to suppose that a few raw recruits were lounging around the place, and we would most likely find our plans opposed by from thirty-five to forty men, every one of whom might prove himself as good in a scrimmage as either of us.

When Captain Hyler, in laying his plans, had said we were not to take part in the fighting, he meant that we would give no heed to those outside the colonel's headquarters—meaning such citizens as might come to the rescue. We would have our hands full under any circumstances, and ours was decidedly the post of danger. By this last remark I am not belittling what the captain proposed to do ; his share of the work could not fail to be of the most importance, since upon him rested the responsibility of so handling his men in different portions of the town as to hold us free from outside interference.

That which struck me as odd during this conversation, was the fact that all us Dunkels had suddenly become such ardent Whigs. But for the many acts of cruelty and oppression by the king's troops, we should have still been his majesty's faithful subjects, whereas we were now as eagerly plotting against him as if we had been the founders of that association known as the Sons of Liberty.

By the time the Princess was off the point from which a full view of Oyster Bay could be had, Captain Hyler's work was done. Five men—us Dunkels and himself—were the only persons on deck, and while our weapons remained out

of sight on the after-cuddy stairs, we were no more than peaceful citizens.

When we sighted the guard-ship she was a mile or more away, standing across the bay, and I was beginning to think we might not be molested while trying to enter, when she came about, firing a blank cartridge as signal for us to heave to.

My father brought the Princess up into the wind, saying as he did so :

“Have your pass ready to show, Amos. By attempting to run away we'd only succeed in bringing the schooner after us, which might be disagreeable when we began our work ashore.

I smoothed out the bit of paper and stood ready to show it when these guardians of the bay should come alongside, which last could be safely and quickly done while the water was so smooth.

The document in itself was not much to look at, being only an ordinary sheet to which was affixed a seal sufficiently large to have answered for his majesty's signature. I will copy the words from that same pass, which is at this instant lying before me :

FLUSHING, *November 4th*, 1776.

Permit the bearer thereof, Simon Hunt, and three companions, to pass without hindrance to New York bay and vicin-

ity, or until he shall have taken prisoners two lads, by name Dunkel, whom he pursues with my warrant, the same being seditious persons who are conspiring against the King.

“EPHRAIM DOWNES,
Captain in His Majesty's Service, and, also,
Justice of the Peace.”

“One of us must get out of sight,” I said, recalled to this fact as I idly re-read the pass. “This document refers to Simon Hunt and three companions, while we are five.”

Without replying Captain Hyler disappeared down the ladder leading to the forward cuddy, and we were in trim to be overhauled by the king's representatives, provided they did not push their investigations too far. In which last case it would become necessary to overpower them by fair means or foul, and take our chances on the alarm being given to Colonel Emerick.

The good fortune which had attended Zenas and myself since we left our home did not desert us now. After a time, for she was a dull sailer, the schooner came alongside, and I tied the pass to the end of a boat-hook, holding it out as the craft came up, while Moses took her hawser lest she drift away while the paper was being inspected.

He who acted as captain wore the British naval uniform, and I felt certain the crew were all

strangers to the colonies, therefore we had little fear regarding the imposture which was being practised.

The commander of the guard was in no wise suspicious. He glanced carelessly over the pass, and asked while handing it back to me :

“Why do you think those whom you seek may be in this bay?”

“Because we have already cruised near to Sandy Point without satisfaction, and have come to the conclusion that instead of trying to join the Americans in Jersey, they are making for Connecticut. We hope, sir, that your coming here may have shut them in somewhere along shore.”

“If they were in this vicinity when we arrived, I’ll answer for it they are here now, because never a craft has been allowed to go past us without showing the proper permission.”

While the captain of the guard was talking, Moses let slip the hawser, and the distance between the two vessels began to widen rapidly.

Father brought the sloop around into the wind once more, and we headed for the lower end of the bay, the schooner standing off again toward the opposite shore.

“It was all very well for us to talk about cap-

turing that guard-ship whenever we felt so disposed," I said to Zenas, while we watched the slowly-moving craft. "Her crew are evidently of the kind to show plenty of fight, and more than one of us would stand good chance of stopping a British bullet."

"I don't want to be accused of showing the white feather," my brother replied in a low tone; "but as a matter of fact I hope Captain Hyler won't take it into his head that it is necessary to get rid of yonder schooner, unless, perchance, we might manage to creep up on her in the night, when all hands could be taken by surprise."

I suddenly realized that we were not showing the most excellent sense by discussing the possibilities of an enterprise yet in the future, when we had not returned from the one in hand, and immediately went aft to enjoy the company of my father, from whom it seemed as if I had been separated many a long day.

Not until the guard-ship was at such a distance astern that those on board could not make out what we might be about, did Captain Hyler set about the final preparations for the attack.

The two whale-boats on deck were lowered into the water, thus giving us three staunch craft in which to effect a landing, and then the men were

told off into three crews, with four left out of the count to keep ship during our absence.

I noted with considerable dissatisfaction the fact that Elijah Cornwall was one of the squad which would remain in charge of the sloop, and but for the fear of getting myself disliked by his friends, I would have asked Captain Hyler to replace him with some other of the crew, although I ran the chance of having a man even more timorous than he left in charge of the vessel.

Two swivels were brought out of the hold and mounted in the bow, and a supply of ammunition sufficient for quite a battle was laid ready for use.

Mother came on deck to talk with us boys ; but her conversation was confined to cautioning us to take good care of ourselves when the party went ashore, and I could not but laugh at the idea of a lad doing his best at carefulness while taking part in what might prove to be a regular battle.

By the time we sighted Oyster Bay everything was arranged. Each man had a musket with plenty of powder and ball, and once more the captain repeated his idea of how the work might best be done.

Nearer and nearer we approached to the town. The sun was nearly hidden behind the trees, and

we knew that our task, if performed at all, must be done under cover of darkness, which was little to my liking.

No apparent attention was paid to us until the Princess was within a quarter of a mile of the shore, and our people were clambering into the boats ready to cast off as soon as the anchor should be let go. Then two or three men came toward the shore, gazing for an instant in our direction, and moved slowly backward, as if undecided whether we were friends or foes.

I was already in the first whale-boat when the sloop swung around to her moorings. The remainder of the crew scrambled on board, and Captain Hyler said in a low tone as he took his station in the stern-sheets, addressing himself to the occupants of the other boats :

“Hold steady, lads, when we are ashore, in order that we may march in proper fashion. Much mischief can be done if one strives to outstrip the other on the way to the British quarters.”

By the time we reached the shore the loungers had made up their minds that our visit boded them no good, and with a loud cry of “Whigs ! Whigs !” they took to their heels, bent on warning the village.

Captain Hyler did not allow himself to be

hurried by the fact that we were discovered. Once the party had been landed he forced every man to stand in line until we were ready to set out, when he gave the order for the company commanded by my father to lead the way.

We marched in proper fashion, save, perhaps, that we did not carry our weapons according to regulations, and with rapid stride.

My heart beat loud and fast as we approached the building where I had been told that Colonel Emerick had his headquarters. I had never seen a gun discharged in anger, and was altogether uncertain as to how I might behave if we should be led up to a squad of soldiers who would open fire at the word of command. It seemed impossible that I could show the white feather at such a time and while so many of my own people were near at hand; but the thumping in my throat, and the faintness which suddenly came upon me, were much like signs of downright cowardice.

Five minutes later, and I had no time to think of myself.

We marched straight up to the building where was the recruiting office, and the Hessian who stood on guard at the door did not so much as turn his head when we approached.

Then, when we were no more than thirty paces from the door, and I knew without looking around that the remainder of our company were forming a line to prevent the townspeople from taking a hand in the scrimmage, Lieutenant Colonel Emerick suddenly appeared in full uniform, as if he had come out for parade.

So far as I could see, he was alone ; but he stood there so quiet and calm that I could not but admire him, Britisher though he was, and especially when he cried out to us as if we had been a portion of his own force :

“ Halt ! What is the meaning of this array ? ”

Just behind me I heard the report of a musket, and knew that the force led by the captain had at last come to blows. Then my heart was stirred by hearing my father say in the tone of one who is accustomed to speaking with military gentlemen :

“ We have come for you, colonel, and our force is so large that you will do well to surrender peaceably.”

The Hessian remained at his post like a statue, save that he was looking at us from the corner of his eye.

“ Do you fancy that an officer in his majesty’s service will surrender to a squad of ragamuffins like you ? ” Colonel Emerick cried, and then he

opened the door of his quarters which had been shut behind him as he came out, but my father shouted :

“Ready, lads ! Take aim ! But wait till I give the word for firing. Then make certain your bullets find their targets !”

Two recruits—Tories from nearabout I judged—came on the threshold in response to a wave of the colonel’s hand, and I could have laughed, so great was my relief, for now it was certain we had surprised the Britisher without proper guard for one with as high a commission as his.

“Will you surrender, sir, or do you prefer that we carry away your lifeless body ?” my father asked sharply. “There must be no delay, give up your sword and cause the soldier to lay down his musket, or my men will fire !”

The colonel was looking earnestly over our heads, at a place where our muskets were singing briskly, and I understood that he was trying to decide whether he might make a point by parleying with us.

Father had much the same idea as came into my mind ; but he dared not turn his head lest the Britisher should in some way get the advantage. I do not believe a single man in our squad attempted to satisfy his curiosity as to what might

be taking place behind him. We knew that our share in the venture was to make a prisoner of the Britisher, and that we were not to meddle with any other portion of the business.

“For the last time, sir, will you surrender?” my father cried. “In five seconds I shall give the word to fire!”

At this the two raw recruits made a sudden dash for the door, and in a twinkling had disappeared from view.

The colonel glanced over our heads once more, and then, with an exclamation of rage and disappointment, he threw his sword toward us, at the same time saying something in a low tone to the Hessian.

Immediately the soldier laid down his musket, and faced about as if no more than a piece of machinery.

In obedience to orders Zenas and Moses stepped forward, ranging themselves either side the colonel, and the word was given to march toward the shore.

Then it was that we saw the remainder of our company bravely holding their own against a dozen soldiers, two officers and a mob of townspeople, all of which explained why we had found the colonel with as small a headquarters' guard.

His men, as well as his staff, had probably been out drumming up recruits, and did not have time to rejoin their commander before we surrounded him.

So far as could be seen the combatants were about even in numbers; if anything the odds were slightly against our people, and I felt certain they would be forced to retreat finally.

The order given to our squad was to make for the sloop without delay after having secured the colonel; but surely it was not necessary that twenty-four men should accompany two unarmed prisoners, when a single guard would have been sufficient to get them safely on board, and I said hurriedly to father:

“Would it not be well, despite Captain Hyler’s commands, to divide our company and aid those who are soon like to be sorely pressed? If a dozen of us are added to them, there can be no doubt as to the result?”

Instead of replying father motioned for twelve of our squad to follow me, and we set off on a smart run, cheering lustily.

It was indeed a battle which was being waged. Already two of our men were down, but only wounded, and I noted with satisfaction that the enemy had suffered quite as much.

It was our sudden rush which turned the tide. when we were within ten paces of the others I gave the word to halt and fire, cautioning my followers to take careful aim, and the result was that the odds were suddenly changed in our favor.

Understanding that it was necessary for us to reload, Captain Hyler gave the word for his men to push forward, and by the time the enemy had been forced back a few yards, my squad was ready for business.

I never so much as thought of possible danger to myself when I ordered the lads forward, halted them, and gave the word for each fellow to take aim.

We were within such short range that every one of my twelve muskets would have brought down its target, and this the Britishers and Tories knew as well as I did.

In a twinkling the foremost of the enemy had flung down their weapons, and the victory was ours, at no greater expense than two wounded men.

Captain Hyler was out for bigger game than Tories, and he gave little attention to the fellows who were actually groveling in fear before us. The two officers were ordered to march toward

the shore, and with them were sent six men as guards.

Then orders were given that we take possession of all the money, arms and ammunition to be found, and the night was no more than come before we were marching down to the water's edge, and in the distance were two boats putting off with our prisoners.

At this instant I chanced to look behind me, and there, standing in the midst of the terrified townspeople, as if giving them good advice, was a lad who bore a most striking likeness to Simon Hunt.

Involuntarily I wheeled about, and then came the thought that it could not be him, for surely he was a prisoner on board the Princess. I must have been deceived, as I well might be in the gloom, and contented myself by saying to Zenas who marched at my side :

“There is a lad back there who bears a most amazing likeness to Simon Hunt.”

“And you were about to return, believing it was him,” Zenas replied with a laugh ; but before it was possible for me to say anything more, Captain Hyler seized my hand, as he asked :

“Was it your idea to lend us aid, or did your father send you ?”

The thought came into my mind that the captain was minded to find fault because we had disobeyed his orders by leaving the prisoners, and I was resolved that the blame should lie where it rightfully belonged.

“I begged my father to let me go back with a dozen men, and surely no harm was done, for the remainder of our party could guard two unarmed prisoners.”

“Harm done, lad? I had just made up my mind that we must beat a retreat to the shore, and was only holding on until you had gotten your prizes on board before giving the word. You have done us a good turn, and I shall thank Nathan Pratt more than once for having sent you to me.”

Now it was I wished I had held my tongue and allowed him to believe the return was an idea of father's, instead of taking all the credit to myself.

However, the mischief had been done, and I am not to be blamed for feeling proud at being thus praised, for I knew full well that what we did was of greatest service to the captain's party.

The prisoners were all embarked before Zenas and I stepped into the last boat remaining near the landing, and once we were pulling toward

the sloop I grew uneasy regarding the identity of that lad on shore who had so much the likeness of Simon.

Immediately I went over the rail of the Princess, and while some of the others were making sail, I rushed into the hold ; but it was so dark I found it necessary to return to the cuddy and light a lantern before I could assure myself that matters were as they should be.

When I was equipped for an inspection of prisoners the Princess was under way out of the harbor with a bone in her teeth, and I had good reason for believing that in two or three hours at the longest we would be within hail of the guardship.

An instant later I was calling myself the greatest simple on Long Island because of having been so moderate in my movements after coming aboard, and also because I had not sufficient sense to go back at once when I saw the face which looked like Simon's, in order to make certain to whom it belonged.

One glance was sufficient to show me that two of the prisoners were missing—Simon Hunt and Micah Williams—and then I ran on deck in a fury of rage, coming face to face with Elijah Cornwall.



I ran on deck in a fury of rage, coming face to face with Elijah Cornwall.—Page 142.

Amos Dunkel.

“What were you doing while we were ashore?” I asked, speaking as calmly as was possible.

“Doing?” he repeated stupidly. “I wasn’t doing anything except keeping an eye on you fellows.”

“And that you did, instead of looking after the prisoners!” I cried, no longer able to hold my tongue in check.

“The prisoners don’t need looking after,” he said, grinning like an idiot. “We were stationed here to defend the sloop if it so happened that you got the worst of the scrimmage, and how could we do our duty unless we kept watch on what was happening ashore?”

The poor fool was speaking only the truth, and yet at the time I would not allow that he had a right to do other than keep the prisoners under his eye all the time.

Even while I raged he failed to understand what I was driving at, and asked me why I was kicking up such a row over nothing.

“We’ll see whether it’s nothing!” I roared in such a tone that every word could be heard aft, where Captain Hyler and his prisoners stood. “You stayed here like stupids with hands in your pockets, and those who were in the hold walked off at their own sweet will!”

“Have they escaped?” he asked in blank amaze, and Captain Hyler came forward on the run, followed by father and Zenas.

“What has gone wrong?” the captain asked, laying his hand on my shoulder.

“While we were ashore, sir, Simon Hunt and Micah Williams quietly walked off, and those who were left in charge of the sloop knew nothing about it, or else knew too much,” I replied, so angry that I did not hesitate at implying that they might have aided in the escape. “Had any of the others gotten away it would not have been quite so bad; but Simon Hunt will devote his entire time to giving information concerning us, and it is probable that he has learned very much regarding your plans, for when our men were hidden in the hold no caution was given them against speaking in the presence of the prisoners.”

Captain Hyler looked quite as disturbed as I felt, and called sharply the name of each man who had been left on board to care for the ship, which led me to believe they would get a tongue-lashing if nothing more, while I walked away, thinking I had no right to listen to what the commander might say.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE RENDEZVOUS.

THAT the four stupids who kept such a poor watch over the prisoners that two could walk away, had a disagreeable ten minutes with Captain Hyler there was good reason to believe after seeing the expressions on their faces when the interview was come to an end ; but neither harsh words nor threats would bring back that villainous Tory, Simon Hunt.

If the other three had succeeded in making their escape, leaving Simon behind, I would not have been so disturbed in mind, for he was capable of working more mischief than all his companions together. I had no fear that the cur could lay any dangerous scheme against us out of his own head ; but with a force of Britishers at his back sufficiently large to allay his cowardice, and well acquainted with the inlets and bays on this portion of the shore, he might do us much mischief.

However, it was taking too much on myself

to display ill-temper when our commander was present to bear the responsibilities, and, after giving vent to my disappointment and anger privately in Zenas' hearing, I did my best to put out of mind the apprehensions caused by the escape.

The prisoners taken at Oyster Bay, presumably being gentlemen, were allowed the run of the sloop after having given their word of honor that they would make no attempt at escape, and we sailed out of the bay, steering boldly past the guard-ship as if indifferent whether we were brought to or allowed to hold our course.

It was reasonable to suppose that we were bound for the rendezvous agreed upon by such portion of Captain Hyler's company as were bringing the whale-boats around the island ; but yet I could not believe we would thus betray our secret to the British officers.

A few hours afterward I learned, as I had opportunities of doing many times later, that our captain could be depended upon to keep his intentions to himself, and that it was the veriest folly for me to concern myself as to his possible carelessness in anything he might have in hand.

Once we were well past the guard-ship Captain Hyler and my father, while Zenas stood at the

tiller, had a long confab together, after which our commander said to Colonel Emerick in a tone sufficiently loud for us all to hear :

“Doubtless you understand, sir, that we have not taken you prisoner from any personal motive. By such a step as that which we have just taken, I count on being able to release many of my countrymen who are now in the hands of the British.”

“It is an exchange you propose to make !” the officer cried, his face lighting up as if the announcement afforded him considerable relief of mind.

“That is exactly it, sir.”

“On what terms ?”

“Twenty of our men for yourself, and fifteen for each of your officers. It is the same exchange as had been proposed by Howe, therefore you will see that we are not disposed to drive any hard bargain even though having come so far to get possession.”

“When will you send word into the British lines ?” Colonel Emerick asked, looking decidedly relieved at the idea that he would not probably be forced to remain a prisoner in close quarters many days.

“As soon as all the arrangements between us have been made, sir. We also have on board one

Downes, of Flushing, who claims to hold a commission as captain from the British king. Is it your wish to include him in the negotiations which will be opened ?”

The colonel hesitated as a frown came over his face, and I concluded that he was not overburdened with love for the Flushing justice of peace.

“How do you propose to exchange him ?” he asked after a pause.

“Inasmuch as he is a Tory as well as British officer, I have set him down as worth, in such an exchange, twenty-five of our men, and I put the price high, because I have many on board who believe he should be hanged——”

“Remember, sir, that General Howe can hang men in reprisal !”

“He is already starving and shooting them, in addition to hanging ; it is the general, not I, who sets the fashion in executing prisoners,” Captain Hyler replied calmly, and it was plain to be seen that the conversation was taking a turn not exactly to the colonel’s liking, for he said quickly, as if to change the subject :

“I suppose it is no more than right that *Mr.* Downes should be included in the proposition, although I question if General Howe will consider that he is worth more in exchange than a lieu-

tenant-colonel. His commission as captain was intended rather as a compliment, I fancy."

"If your people don't want the sneak, we will see to it he is given the same treatment as that which he has dealt out to others."

"How will you send word to New York?" the colonel asked, giving no heed to this implied threat.

"I have a man who was captured while in Captain Downes' company. You shall write a pass which will fully protect the boat's crew sent with him, and an exchange can be made at the outermost point of Eton's Neck, where I will conduct you when a sufficient number of our men have been sent in exchange."

"And when may this man of whom you speak be sent out?"

"Whenever you have prepared a message and written a pass. We will stand off and on near-about until the boat is under way. It may be well that you appoint the fourth day from this as the time when we will be at the rendezvous. If your friends fail to appear, I will see to it that you are at the same place on the second day thereafter."

Colonel Emerick took some paper from his pocket, and, using the top of the cuddy for a

writing table, began his letter ; but Captain Hyler interrupted him by saying :

“ Here is a list of names from which the prisoners sent in exchange must be selected.”

He extended an official-looking document which the Britisher glanced over hurriedly, afterward saying in a tone of irritation :

“ You are asking the impossible, sir. It isn't to be expected that General Howe can seek out these particular people from among the many prisoners in New York.”

“ Then we shall have the pleasure of your company longer than I had anticipated.”

“ But think of what you ask !” the colonel cried, biting his lip to keep anger within bounds.

“ It would be a most stupendous task to find each of these persons while the prisoners are distributed in so many places.”

“ On the contrary. Those names which have a cross set down against them will be found in the prison-ship Jersey ; the others are, or were a week ago, in the new Bridewell.”

The Britisher made no further comment ; but began once more to write, and the task was such a long one that the Princess was hove to lest we should get so far off our course as to necessitate great loss of time in returning.

Captain Hyler took good care to read the letter, addressed to General Howe, and the pass, before he sent below for the man we had taken from Captain Downes' boat.

Then, in order that there might be no secret communication between the officers and the messenger, the former were sent into the forward cuddy until the boat had started.

A crew of four men were told off to escort the prisoner to the British lines, and I was well content at not hearing the name of Dunkel on the list, for all of my father's sons would have been disgruntled had any one or more of us been sent away before arrangements were made for the safety of our mother.

Captain Downes' man appeared to be rejoiced at thus being given partial liberty, and on looking back after the boat had pushed off from the Princess he was grinning like an ape.

Colonel Emerick and his companions were allowed to come out of the cabin once the messenger had departed, and then the sloop was hauled around on a course for the rendezvous which had been agreed upon between our commander and the men who were sailing the fleet around the island.

Smithtown Bay, near the inlet, was the place

decided upon, and our captain believed, because of the steady winds, that at least a portion of his men would be there by the time we arrived.

In this, however, he was disappointed. Not a craft could be seen when we stood off and on near the inlet, and then, much to my surprise, the sloop was headed for the Connecticut shore.

“Captain Hyler has consented to put your mother ashore at Greenwich Point,” father said to me a few moments later, and I was nigh to crying out in surprise, for I had not counted it as possible that she would be sent so far from us.

“We have a friend there of whom you have heard us speak—Thomas Page. With his family your mother will be safe from Tories and Britishers alike, although mayhap we shall not be able to see her often. There are hard blows to be dealt and received, and it is our duty to make certain she will not be exposed to danger.”

It goes without saying that I was well pleased at knowing my mother would be in a place of safety; but nevertheless I was disappointed because it would not be possible for us lads to visit her whenever our duties permitted. I hid my feelings, however, when, at about midnight, we set her ashore in one of the boats, and did my best

to give a cheery ring to my voice as I bade her good-by.

An hour later the Princess was under way once more, heading for Smithtown Bay, and I turned in, hoping sleep would speedily come to soothe my grief at the recent parting.

The side of a plank is anything rather than a rest-inviting bed ; but my body was so weary that slumber soon brought its sweet unconsciousness, and not until the Princess had come to an anchor off the inlet did I awaken to the realization that I was a rebel, proscribed by the representatives of the king, and likely to have a taste of prison life whenever we should meet with such force of the enemy as would be able to overpower us.

Three of the whale-boats sent around from Raritan Bay had arrived, and the others were already in sight, therefore much work was expected from all hands as we came to understand, when, the prisoners being kept in the hold or the forward cuddy where nothing on the shore could be seen by them, Captain Hyler announced it as his purpose to make at this place such a shelter as would be necessary in case we needed a temporary dwelling.

As Zenas and I understood the plans, hearing a

little here and there, it was our commander's intention to divide the fleet into small squadrons, in order that we might strike three or four blows at the same time, and quarters on shore would be needed.

The first move was to send one of the boats with a crew of eight men across the sound for a supply of provisions. Twenty were detailed to build houses, or, perhaps, huts would be the proper word, and yet another boat's crew was assigned to the duty of fishing.

I no longer paid any heed to the care of our prisoners. The four lads under command of Elijah Cornwall, who had performed the task so ill while we were in Oyster Bay, were continued in the office of jailers, and since Simon Hunt had given us the slip it was no longer any particular affair of mine whether they were held securely, or given an opportunity to escape.

The thought constantly in my mind was that we would one day find ourselves in a fine pickle because of that villainous cur who had taken it upon himself to lodge information with the king's officers against the Dunkels, and while I did not believe he would succeed in working any serious mischief, I felt positive much trouble would be the result of his efforts.

The spot selected by Captain Hyler as our encampment during the cold winter months now so near at hand, was within a quarter of a mile of the shore, and on a slight elevation, from which could be had a good view of the bay. Four log huts were to be put up—two small ones for a prison and a kitchen, and two large buildings in which we might find shelter from the weather.

Such plans as these required considerable labor, and during two days all hands of us, save the guard on board the sloop, were toiling like beavers at felling trees, squaring timbers and setting posts.

Then was come the time when it became necessary to set out to meet those who had escorted the messenger to New York, for our commander did not count on letting the British know the whereabouts of our rendezvous, and to my great delight all the Dunkels were told off as members of the sloop's crew.

It was not because of indolence that I rejoiced at being afloat, for if the cause of liberty demanded that I work at building huts I could perform the task day in and day out with never a murmur; but what I wanted most of all was to be on active service, and, with such a commander as Captain Hyler, I had no doubt but that the Prin-

cess would be well in the front whenever anything of moment was going on.

There is no good reason why I should give all the details of that journey which resulted in the release of fifty men, young and old, whose crimes in the eyes of the British consisted in their taking up arms in defense of their country, their homes and their loved ones. More than half this number came from the prison-ship Jersey, and it is beyond my power to picture the condition of the poor fellows when we received them on board. They were half clad, and such poor garments as remained to them hung in rags about their wasted limbs; starvation and sickness had brought them to such weakness that the majority had not strength to clamber over the rail of the Princess; but were lifted up like children by our fellows.

We had, by agreement made with Colonel Emerick's messenger, met the schooner which had been transformed into a cartel, at a point midway between New York and Oyster Bay, and there the three officers left us; but Captain Downes' remained on board to his great fear and grief. Those appointed by General Howe to arrange for the exchange refused to make any offer for the liberty of the worthy justice of the peace from Flushing, declaring that his name was not on the

army list, therefore he was not recognized as a member of the king's forces.

He was afterward taken to the rendezvous on Smithtown Bay, and there forced to perform his share of the labor necessary to put into shape our encampment.

I do not propose to make any extended mention of the straits into which the American army had fallen by this time, although the tale might be more entertaining if it were possible to keep the reader in touch with all that was going on around us during those dark days when there appeared to be little hope that the colonists could hold out much longer against the king.

New York evacuated and half the city destroyed by fire ; Fort Washington taken from us, and three thousand noble men carried to New York to swell the list of deaths by starvation, sickness and the hangman's noose ; Fort Lee evacuated, our troops being so hard pressed that they were forced to leave behind them cannon, tents, blankets and provisions, all of which were needed sorely by our brave soldiers ; General Charles Lee conspiring to wrest the command of our armies from General Washington, and while doing so neglecting to support the commander-in-chief, flatly refusing to obey orders ; and,

finally, our poor remnant of an army little better than fugitives in Pennsylvania.

All these misfortunes and disasters were, or seemed to be, sufficient proof that the cause of liberty was well-nigh crushed, yet at this time when no light could be seen amid the dark clouds that hovered over us, Hyler's whale-boatmen struggled on by themselves, supplying their own provisions and ammunition, without hope of wages, and concocting this scheme or that to strike a successful blow at the victorious enemy, believing there would be no reward save such as might be given by the Britishers in shape of a cell in jail, or a berth aboard some one of the many prison-ships.

Before we returned to the rendezvous, after having delivered up the three officers in exchange for our half-starved countrymen, Captain Hyler sent two messengers out to make their way as could best be done to the American army, that General Washington should be told of what we were doing, and also that we considered ourselves as under his command whenever the time came that we might be of service.

I would have felt well pleased at being selected as one of these to visit the commander-in-chief ; but Captain Hyler had chosen his men

and sent them away before our company knew what was being done, therefore neither of us had an opportunity to volunteer for the dangerous service.

We returned to Smithtown Bay, and there found a veritable place of defense, the whale-boatmen having not only erected the buildings, but enclosed them with a stout stockade which would hold in check any ordinary body of the enemy save they might come against us with cannon.

Captain Downes, Ben Seaman, and Clem Parker were lodged in the log jail, and the three Tories had reason to congratulate themselves that they were prisoners in the hands of Americans instead of the British, for we provided them with cleanly, fairly comfortable, quarters, and served out exactly the same rations as all hands enjoyed.

The boat which had been sent to the Connecticut shore brought in a goodly supply of food, and, what was more to the purpose, a store of ammunition; therefore we were prepared, if needs be, to sustain a siege of two weeks or more.

Our men had also provided fuel in plenty, and it seemed as if, considering the fact that our

force was not recognized as legitimate by those sticklers at etiquette in military matters, we were having a reasonably easy time of it.

We were allowed two days on shore in which to take our comfort, and then Captain Hyler called together twelve of us for a private interview.

It was nightfall when the word was whispered to me that the captain would speak confidentially with a certain number of us, and my heart beat quick with excitement, for I knew full well that such a summons would not have come unless there were some especial work to be done.

We had been directed to go on board the Princess, which craft lay just inside the inlet, and when I arrived Zenas and Moses were already there. At least three of us Dunkels had been chosen for the adventure, whatever it might prove to be, and I was even better satisfied than if my father had been present ; one of us might be killed without great loss to any one, but father's life was too precious in my mother's eyes to be lightly risked.

"I'm not reckoning on beating about the bush, lads," Captain Hyler said when twelve of us were gathered on the Princess' deck. "You know why we left New Brunswick to come here. It

was that we might the better be able to deal hard knocks to Britishers and Tories alike, in the hope thereby we could be of benefit to the Cause. There is much that can be done in the way of worrying our enemies, carrying off supplies, confiscating Tory property, and breaking up small bands of our enemies ; but I am not content to rest with that. You know I have sent messengers to General Washington, notifying him that this navy is at his disposal whenever he can use it, and during the time we must wait for some word from him, I count on your doing that which will save at least a few good men from a cruel death."

Here he paused, as if to see what effect his words had on us, and I was all at sea regarding the drift of his speech.

"While we were near the city exchanging prisoners, the thought came to me that by a bold stroke some of those poor fellows on the prisonships might be gotten away. In other words, it wouldn't be such a difficult matter to aid them in breaking jail. I don't pretend to say how it can be done, although I'm ready to discuss the matter with you if such a plan is decided upon. I have called you twelve, believing you are the pick of the company, and ask that you make the

attempt. If you do no more than rescue five of those brave fellows who are being starved or tortured to death, it will be a great achievement. While you are trying that game, the remainder of us will go here and there on the island, or perhaps nearer the city, and do our best at making it interesting for those who have done their share in filling up these same prison-ships."

I dare venture to say that not a fellow among us so much as dreamed of declining such a proposition ; every one was eager to set out on the venture, and yet the idea was so bold that we stood looking at each other in silence while one might have counted twenty, when Captain Hyler said in a tone of deep disappointment :

"I had reckoned that you above all others of our company would jump at the opportunity ; but if it seems too venturesome, don't hesitate to give words to the thought, and we will decide upon some other plan of worrying the Britishers."

It was Zenas who made answer, and I loved him more than ever because of the manly words he spoke :

"I think we are all ready, sir, yes, eager to do as you have proposed, and if I have not spoken before it was from the belief that you knew full well all which is in our hearts. For myself and

my brothers I promise to risk everything in the matter, and never to admit myself beaten until the enemy has me in his clutches."

Before he could say any more the remainder of the company were shouting and cheering at such a rate that the fellows in the stockade came running out as if believing the Britishers were making an attack.

Captain Hyler had no further cause to fear we might be lukewarm in the business.

"I won't say I really feared you would not be willing to make the venture," he said, when the noisy ones were reduced to silence; "but it was in my mind that you believed the task might be well-nigh impossible. However, since you have shown eagerness to be about the work, let us consider it a little. Boats are permitted to go alongside the prison-ships to sell produce, and a number of small craft pull to and fro constantly. It seems to me as if, I cannot say exactly how, some communication might be had with the prisoners, after which the matter will develop itself."

"When are we to set out, sir?" Zenas asked.

"In the morning if you wish. Three small boats would be better than two large ones, and likely to cause less suspicion, providing you do not sail in company. You Dunkels have the

shallop ; I will send out a crew this evening to secure a couple of similar craft from the Tory gentlemen nearabout, and, by dint of much coaxing, we might persuade the worthy Captain Downes to give you passes. It is not likely that very many thereabouts know of his effort to get exchanged on the score of being a British officer, and a permit signed by him for you to trade near about Flushing would probably be honored by the majority of the king's officers."

As he thus spoke I could see a dozen ways of effecting our purpose, and burned with the desire to put one or more of my newly and suddenly formed plans into execution.

And so it was with all the others, as I speedily learned. In that short space of time every one of us had come to believe he knew exactly how to rescue a certain number of prisoners, and all were united in the belief that we should set off without delay.

"I will go ashore to send a party in search of small boats, and also to learn what may be done by way of persuading Captain Downes into giving us safeguards. While I am absent you had best talk the matter over, with a view of deciding upon a course of action. I am not counting that you can lay your plans fully, for everything must

depend upon how you can gain the attention of those to be rescued ; but something can be mapped out to serve until your arrival upon the scene of action."

When we went over the rail every one attempted to make himself heard before his comrades could speak, and the result was a perfect babel of voices amid which not one word in ten could be distinguished, unless it was spoken loud in your ear.

Zenas gave over trying to speak until the others had howled themselves hoarse, and then, when a partial silence had come, he said quietly :

"It is Captain Hyler's proposition that we divide this party into three boat-loads, each seeming to act independently of the other. Suppose we select the crews, and when that has been done, a captain for each boat should be chosen, after which I suggest that every crew have a scheme of its own. If, when we are arrived, it becomes necessary to act in concert, we can readily unite, and no harm will have been done because we were well supplied with plans."

This proposition met with the approbation of all, and in short order the crews were made up, us three Dunkels and Reuben Jackson being together in the shallop, an agreement which suited

me very well, although perhaps we might have had with us some one of more courage than Reuben. The lad, however, would do to the best of his ability whatever we might suggest, and that was more than could have been said of some of the company.

We had ample time in which to discuss plans before Captain Hyler returned, for at the end of two hours he was still absent. We saw, about ten minutes after he went ashore, a boat put out from the inlet, and knew her crew had set off to find a couple of small craft.

From what could be heard now and then, I judged that both the other parties were busily engaged trying to decide upon some definite course of action ; but we made no such attempt.

Then we went aft, where it would be possible to speak privately, and Zenas said, talking only to his own crew :

“It is my belief that we cannot form any plan, no matter how hard we may try, for everything depends upon what may occur after we are near the prison-ships. I suggest that we spend some time collecting a load of eggs, butter and vegetables before setting out, in order that we may have something which the Britishers will be eager to buy. With such a cargo not only the men, but

the officers of the ships, will be pleased to see us, and when we are alongside it is a case of taking the first chance of communicating with the prisoners that presents itself."

I made bold to differ with him in a slight degree, and said :

"In my opinion we should be prepared to take advantage of every opportunity. Now it may so happen that we might pass a letter to one of the prisoners, and yet not have any show to gain speech with him. I would make a short statement on paper to the effect that we have come to give them aid ; our boat and ourselves should be described, so that there will be no mistake, and they can seek a means of communicating with us. If both are thus working for the same end, we are more likely to come to a proper understanding. In case the letter cannot safely be delivered, then we will be none the worse for having written it, since we may destroy it quickly."

"The idea is an exceeding good one, Amos. It shall be your duty to make ready such a letter ; Moses will look after provisions sufficient for four or five days ; I will raise some hard money with which to purchase our stock in trade, and Reuben is to make certain that the shallop is in proper condition."

When all this was said our crew had nothing to do save await the return of Captain Hyler, and I amused myself by listening to those who fancied they could lay down a certain set of rules for their guidance which should insure the success of the venture.

It was well on to ten o'clock in the evening before Captain Hyler came on board, and then he said with a laugh peculiar to himself :

“I have arranged for the passes, lads, and each boat's crew will have one by daylight. If you want to discuss any point with me, let us hear it now ; if not, we'll turn in, for you have a hard day's work before you after sunrise.”

“Our party will not take up your time, sir,” Zenas said as he went over the rail, and we who made up his crew followed him without having so much as elected a captain—there was no need of anything like that, since none was so well fitted to manage the adventure as Zenas himself.

CHAPTER IX.

THE VENTURE.

I WAS the only member of our boat's crew who had any task to perform on that night after we had decided to make an effort to release American prisoners confined in the prison-ships lying in or near Wallabout Bay, and my duty was to write such a letter as would, in case we might succeed in smuggling it on board, give information concerning our intentions.

Surely that ought not to have been a difficult piece of work, and yet I spent half the night over it, trying to say much in few words, for the smaller the missive the more chances of getting it into the hands of those whom we would aid.

Finally, after half a dozen attempts, I wrote the following :

“A shallop, manned by four full-grown lads, will remain nearabout your vessel selling country produce to whomsoever may be allowed to buy. Two other boats are in the vicinity for the same purpose, which is to aid in the escape of so many

as can contrive to elude the guards. Our shallop has a square patch of canvas nailed over the starboard bow near the gunwale. If possible, get word to us as to when we shall lay by to receive you. It would be wisest to set the first cloudy night for the venture. We are prepared to spend many days in such work, therefore do not take needless chances."

This was written on a small slip of paper, and I counted on folding the letter until it should be less than half the size of a bullet. How it might be delivered was a problem which could only be solved after we had arrived and taken due heed to the general situation.

Then I proceeded to nail a square of canvas no larger than my two outstretched hands on that portion of the shallop of which I had spoken, and, this last done to my satisfaction, I laid down in the hut ashore by the side of Zenas, who was already sleeping soundly.

Next morning at daybreak we were aroused by Captain Hyler, the latter presenting much the appearance of a man who has been working all night, and were told it would be well if we set off without delay.

"One of the other boats has just left," he said hurriedly, as if believing every moment was pre-

cious, "and the other will be under way before you are ready."

"Then our men found the small boats they were sent in search of," Zenas said as he arose in a leisurely fashion.

"Two were brought in about midnight. I have here a pass for you, signed by Captain Downes; but it lacks a seal, and may not be looked upon with any great degree of favor by the Britishers."

"Do you know what plans the other lads have formed?" Zenas asked, making no display of haste in his movements.

"One crew counts on laying alongside the Falmouth, ready for an opportunity in case the prisoners can slip overboard just at nightfall, for then there generally are a few of our people on deck for exercise."

"And the other boat?"

"Her crew will go ashore on Long Island, holding themselves in readiness for whatever may turn up. How will you lads set to work?"

"We count first on buying a load of produce, if you and father can provide us with a sum of money, and may be forced to trade with the Britishers many days before an opportunity of getting word to the prisoners as to why we have

come presents itself. We don't count on finishing our task in any very short time ; but when we come back here again, it will be with a boat-load of our people, or I'm much mistaken in the scheme."

"The only objection to it is that there are hundreds of boats manned by Tories, who will be in the same business," Captain Hyler said musingly.

"Which will be so much the better for us. There is safety in numbers."

"Aye, so that among them are none who might recognize you."

"That risk we must take, yet I believe we'll pull through with a fair amount of success."

"So do I," the captain said heartily. "Up to this time no regular effort has been made to release the prisoners, and the British are resting secure in the belief that we are so badly beaten as to prevent us from any such ventures. Now I will say to you much the same as I have to the others : You are embarked in this scheme independently of those who remain here. Do not think of what we may be doing ; in fact, give us no heed until your work is accomplished or has been proven a failure. We shall not be idle ; I count on worrying the enemy in fine style, and

also on keeping up a supply of provisions sufficient for every emergency that may arise. Those whom we received in exchange for the British officers will be sent to their homes, unless it so chances that they wish to join us, and after that has been done our whale-boat navy will find work enough. Be prudent ; shun risks that are not warranted by a reasonable show of success, and, above all, keep secret this rendezvous of ours. You shall have money enough to buy a cargo of produce, for I will take it from the common fund."

This last was something of which I had never heard, and the captain explained that whenever it had been possible to despoil the Tories of their wealth, a full half of such booty had been set aside for the common good, therefore he had on hand quite a sum of hard cash.

When we had eaten breakfast the commander handed Zenas a small bag containing silver coin, and father, who joined us as we were partaking of the morning meal, gave Moses a list of those nearabout from whom we could get supplies by explaining for what purpose they were wanted.

There were no farewells spoken when we pushed the shallop into deep water and leaped on board. It is not well for one's courage to indulge in too many words when about to set off on such

a venture as was ours. We knew that the slightest imprudence might cost us our lives, or, what was worse, under all the circumstances, our liberty, and the odds were against our ever coming back.

Now lest I weary those who may read this tale, I shall pass over three days with but few words, for we spent that much time in getting our stock of provisions on board, and sailing down to Wallabout Bay.

More than once while gathering produce did we try to persuade Zenas into going on even before we had a full cargo ; but he held out resolutely against us, simply repeating when we urged too strongly :

“ We are running bigger risks, lads, than mayhap we shall ever be called upon to take again, and I do not propose to stand the chance of getting my neck into a British noose by making speed. Slow and sure, is my motto, and a few days spent now won't deprive us of the opportunity, while by arriving before everything is in readiness we may be shut out forever from striking a blow against the enemy.”

Because of my brothers' good sense we did not steer for New York until the shallop was fully laden with produce, some of which we had

purchased with the captain's money, but a large portion was contributed by those who were eager to do whatsoever they might toward relieving the distress of those poor fellows cooped up in the prison-ships.

In event of being closely questioned we had agreed to tell the truth as nearly as might be reasonable. We would claim that we were not farmers ; but lads who had conceived the idea of turning an honest penny by buying produce and selling it to whomsoever would purchase at a fair profit. Such story would pave the way for a second or a third visit, if we failed at first and remained unsuspected.

I flattered myself that no person would doubt our statements, for we looked our assumed parts, and the large assortment of goods told that we must have spent considerable time getting the cargo together.

It was a cold, clear morning when we arrived off Wallabout Bay and pulled slowly in, almost expecting to be brought up with a sharp command, or, perhaps, a bullet from some one of the many craft which seemed to cover all the good anchorage of the harbor.

We saw the Jersey and the Good Hope lying midway from the shore to an imaginary line

drawn across the entrance of the bay, and on either side, but some considerable distance away, were the Falmouth, Prince of Wales, Scorpion, and Strombolo, besides many other craft such as transports, guard-boats, heavy scows and boats of all kinds fitted for oars, which appeared to have been brought to this place for repairs.

Here and there along the shores were shipwrights at work patching or refitting a vessel of one kind or another, while loitering amid the workmen were redcoated soldiers who apparently acted as shore guard. There were many small buildings near at hand, each of which had been put to some use by the Britishers, and take it all in all, it was as busy a scene as I ever witnessed.

“Surely we will be able to come and go as we please, for there are so many boats that the Britishers will not be able to keep watch over them all,” Reuben said with a sigh of relief, and my own heart was considerably lighter than it had been when I imagined we would find none save prison-ships in the bay.

Zenas held the tiller while Moses and I were at the oars, and Reuben found a seat on the sacks of potatoes which were piled up in the bow.

All of us were gazing eagerly around, surveying the situation and calculating the chances of success.

Suddenly, while I was watching keenly the moving figures on the Jersey's deck, Zenas gave the word to cease rowing, and to my great surprise he had steered the shallop near a barge which had, in addition to the oarsmen, only a single officer on board.

"I beg your pardon, sir," he began politely ; "but can you tell me if it is permitted to sell such goods as we have here to those on board the ships?"

"Address yourself to one of the captains in charge," the redcoated officer replied, sweeping past us in fine style, and his men grinned as if they thought we were uncommonly green.

Then Zenas steered boldly toward the Jersey, and as we neared her, I saw four young men pulling aimlessly to and fro around the bay.

"Look there !" I whispered eagerly to Moses. "Do you not recognize them as some of our company?"

"It is well not to use your eyes too freely," my brother said reprovngly. "If they recognized us I would not thank them for looking very long in our direction. In case we are strangers here,

as will be represented, one boat should not attract our attention more than another."

I held my peace from that time forth, save when there was a good opportunity of speaking with Reuben while the others were looking another way. Both my brothers were wiser and braver than myself, and I had no desire to let them see that I could be simple-minded while engaged in such a venture.

Zenas steered boldly toward the Jersey, on whose deck we could see small squads of wretched prisoners pacing to and fro for exercise, and to breathe the fresh air, until we were brought up all standing by an order from the ship's deck.

A sergeant shouted gruffly as he stood on the rail near the gangway which extended down over her side to the water :

"Sheer off, you fellows in that boat !"

There were already half a dozen or more small craft lying alongside the big ship, and Zenas pointed to them as he cried :

"Why shall we sheer off more than another ? We have provisions to sell, and are not enemies of the king. Besides, an officer just told us to apply to the captain for permission to dispose of our wares."

"You must have the permission before you

can come alongside," the sergeant persisted, waving us off with his hand.

"But how may that be obtained? I'm willing to give a fat chicken to him who will show me the way to carry on trade."

The soldier pricked up his ears at this proposition, and asked in a more friendly tone :

"Where do you come from?"

"Nearabout Whitestone."

"Have you a pass from the shore authorities?"

"Aye, that I have, and from none less than Captain Downes himself, who is also a justice of the peace."

It evidently pleased the sergeant that Zenas spoke as if he believed a justice of the peace was of great consequence when there were officers of all grades from his majesty's army in the vicinity; but the idea of getting a chicken to eke out his rations had great effect, for he said as he descended the gangway :

"Give me your pass, and I'll see what may be done."

We pulled up to the landing stage, and Zenas handed over the bit of paper which had been wrung, most likely, from our prisoner by means of threats, presenting it with a flourish as if he believed it was an exceedingly valuable document.

The sergeant laughed as he unfolded it ; but his mirth did not prevent him from trying to earn the chicken.

He went leisurely up the gangway while we remained alongside the landing stage, and my heart beat so vigorously because of the fear which came over me, that I almost feared he might hear the noise.

Our pass, which bore neither seal nor any token of the writer's office, would be scrutinized by an officer who was probably on the alert for such a trick as we were trying to play, and it seemed to me certain we would be taken prisoners without parley.

We were setting about our work boldly, which perhaps was the best way ; but it insured our speedy downfall if the plan went awry.

I did not dare to so much as raise my eyes ; but kept them fixed on the gunwale of the shallop, straining my ears for the first sound which should proclaim that our true character had been discovered, while Zenas and Moses spoke of this or that, gazing around curiously meanwhile as if there was no question but that our pass would be accepted as being in due form.

Had I been sent on this mission in charge of a party, then of a surety should I have retreated at



"Where's the chicken?" the sergeant asked as he appeared once more, with the paper in his hand.—Page 181.

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this moment ; but, as I have said many times before, my brothers were quick-witted and brave as lions, therefore it was that we succeeded in our first attempt at establishing relations with the crew and guard of the prison-ship.

“Where’s the chicken ?” the sergeant asked as he appeared once more, with the paper in his hand.

“Have we permission to trade here?” Zenas asked as he selected a plump-looking fowl from a dozen or more we carried under the after thwart.

“Here it is,” and the sergeant handed my brother the pass which had been made out by Captain Downes. Across the face of it was written in bold letters :

“The parties herein named have permission to trade with this ship.

“GLEASON, Lieut., H.M.S. Jersey.”

I came near gasping with surprise and joy as Zenas, after delivering the chicken, proceeded to make our shallop fast to the landing stage. It seemed almost impossible that we could have succeeded in our mission so far as to be free to come and go at pleasure. I had believed that this portion of our task would be the most difficult of accomplishment, and yet it was done without loss of time and at trifling expense.

The sergeant explained that we would be at

liberty to remain where we then were, provided our boat did not occupy a place which might be required by official visitors, in which case we must shift our moorings without delay. We would not be allowed to go on deck, unless summoned by some officer of the ship, and our customers would come down to us.

“Is that the way of it?” Zenas said, and from his tone one would have supposed that he was nearly overcome by disappointment. “We were told that a good deal of profitable trade could be carried on with the prisoners. It stands to reason that they, who cannot go on shore, would be willing to pay high prices.”

“You’ll be given a show at them, although some one of the guard must aid in the trading,” the sergeant replied with a wink of the eye. “Whenever a squad comes on deck the Yankees may, if those who are charged with the duty of keeping them in check are willing to take the trouble, do a bit of business with you ; but there’s considerable extra work for us who are thus forced to run back and forth.”

“Is it true that the prisoners have money?” Zenas asked eagerly.

“Aye, some of them are provided with hard cash.”

“And we may charge them a stiff price?”

The sergeant laughed heartily as he replied :

“So that you make it to our interest, the price can be fixed as you please.”

“Then hark you, Mr. Officer,” Zenas said confidentially. “If you will stand with us, a full quarter of all the money we receive from the prisoners in the course of trading shall be handed over to you. It appears to me that, if we count on turning an honest penny, it is necessary to have a friend at court.”

“You shall have one in me, lad,” the sergeant said, glancing quickly around to make certain the bargain had not been overheard by any of his comrades. “What is more, I’ll turn over to you all the trade which comes my way, and that will amount to considerable on such days as I am doing guard duty.”

“Then we’ll call it a deal !” Zenas cried as if overjoyed, and I was almost frightened because our plan was working so smoothly. It seemed certain we must finally have bad luck if the venture began so well.

The sergeant went up the gangway, hiding the chicken under his coat lest it be seen by his messmates and he be forced to share with others, while Zenas ordered us who represented

the crew, to get our produce out so that it might readily be seen.

Had we really been the close-fisted traders our bargaining gave token of, we could not have set to work with a better will. After overhauling the stock in trade hastily, we made a most tempting display of the wares, and it saddened me as I realized that many a poor, half-starved fellow who was without money would gaze at the provisions eagerly and vainly, while we were forced to close our hearts against his longing looks in order to sustain the character we had given ourselves.

Not a word did we dare to exchange with each other, for the sergeant was watching us closely in order to earn the commission which had been promised him ; but I contrived to take from its hiding-place the letter we counted on sending aboard, in order that it might be in readiness whenever an opportunity presented itself.

Thanks to the zeal of the sergeant, we had no lack of customers once we were ready for business. He called the attention of some prisoners who were pacing to and fro on the deck, and announced that he was ready to act as go-between for any who had hard money with which to purchase goods.

It cut me to the heart to hear Zenas bargain-

ing with those unfortunates who hungered for our wares and yet dared not part with all the money in their possession ; but we could not do less than insist on receiving twice what the goods were worth, else, by arousing suspicions, our permit to trade would have been taken from us.

Business was not so brisk but that two of our crew could attend to it comfortably, and as Moses insisted on performing his full share, Reuben and I had little to do save watch the proceedings.

Whenever one of the hungry squad which overhung the rail had made a purchase, the sergeant came down the gangway for it with the money in his hand, and after this had been done again and again I began to despair of being able to send my letter on board.

Then, after half an hour had passed, this lot of prisoners were sent below that another squad might be brought up, and during the lull I hit upon a plan which would either serve our purpose, or insure the death of all four by the hangman's noose.

The sergeant had disappeared while the Americans were going below and others coming up to take their places. There were none of the Britishers in sight from where we lay, and,

attracting the attention of my companions, I held up a potato and the folded letter, motioning that I would conceal the paper within the vegetable.

Both Zenas and Moses readily understood what I would do, and the former nodded his head in token that I might attempt to play the dangerous game.

Selecting one of the largest potatoes, I cut into it deeply, taking out a round piece nearly an inch in diameter. This left an aperture sufficiently large to insert the letter, and then, cutting off the inner end of the portion I had extracted, the remainder was put back after the fashion of a plug. Unless held in the hand, it would be difficult to distinguish that one from another which had not been thus prepared.

After the sergeant called the attention of this second squad to our boat, all the unfortunates crowded to the rail, and I was like to have cried out in surprise, for, on looking up I saw Abel Cummings, a lad from Flushing who had joined the rebel army two weeks before the battle of Brooklyn.

When he left home my brothers and I had been counted as Tories, therefore he had no reason to greet us as friends, and fortunate it was for us

that in his eyes we were enemies, otherwise something might have been said to prevent my plan from being carried out.

This second squad were better supplied with money than the first we had waited upon, and the sergeant was busy running up and down the gangway, much to his delight, for he kept strict account of all the business done.

While the Britisher was thus engaged I watched my chance, and, catching Abel's eye when none were observing us, I pointed to the potato I had prepared, winking as I did so.

A look of surprise came over his face, and I knew he was astonished that a Tory should thus appear friendly ; but, after struggling with the problem a few seconds, he seemed to suspect my real purpose, for he nodded his head slightly to show that he understood it was our intention to get that particular potato into his possession.

Now I must have failed in my work had not Zenas been keener of wit than the majority of lads, for it was forbidden that we pass anything to the prisoners save by the sergeant's hand.

My brother, who had already recognized Abel, set about giving me the opportunity I desired, and succeeded as only he could have done.

When such of the prisoners as were possessed

of money had made their purchases, and business had slackened, Zenas said in a low tone to the sergeant :

“ We have taken in more cash so far than I expected to get after working a full day. Your share, as I reckon it, cannot be less than twenty shillings.”

“ Twenty-one,” the Britisher replied quickly, thus showing how carefully he had watched us.

“ I will count the cash to make certain, for it was only eight shillings we had taken according to the figuring which I made while we were disposing of the goods. You shall have the full amount promised, for this is too profitable a trade to be spoiled by haggling with a friend. We should have even a better day to-morrow, after all the Whigs between decks know that we’ve got a goodly supply of produce.”

“ Aye, that you will, lad ; but it must come to an end for to-day, unless you are minded to continue without me. I shall be off duty when this squad is sent below.”

“ Then we’ll go ashore and replenish our stock. I’m not content to let another share in this trade. When will you be on duty again ?”

“ From sunrise to-morrow, until about this time,” the sergeant replied, appearing well satis-

fied because Zenas did not count upon carrying on the trade without him.

“Toss up a few potatoes to those fellows who haven’t been able to buy anything,” Zenas said to us three who were under his command. Then turning to the sergeant, he added, “it won’t do any harm if we give away a few pennies’ worth, and those who thus receive something for nothing will tell the others, so that we are likely to get the biggest portion of the trade. These Yankees will buy more liberally of him who throws in a bit now and then.”

The Britisher knew that he was exceeding his power in thus allowing us to pass anything directly to the prisoners; but while he spoke Zenas had taken from his pocket the silver received in exchange for the goods, as if about to divide it, and the sergeant was more concerned lest he should be defrauded of his just portion, than in obeying orders.

Reuben and I did not wait many seconds before carrying out the proposition. He tossed a potato first to one and then another who had been hungrily watching us, and I, holding that one in which was concealed the letter, waited the opportunity to throw it into Abel’s hands.

He was on the alert, and, bending over to make

certain of catching it, gave me the chance I so ardently desired.

The potato was safely delivered into his hands and I saw him hastily thrust it in his pocket. Then I tossed up a dozen more to the others, and it cut me to the heart as I saw some of the more nearly famished ones begin to eat the prize greedily, unwilling to wait until it could be cooked.

By this time Zenas had finished his business with the sergeant, having paid over to him twenty-one shillings, and I was near to being choked with joy that for so small a sum of money we had gained our purpose within four hours after making the attempt.

There was little probability now that my trick would be discovered by the Britishers, for if Abel was as quick-witted as he gave evidence of being, that particular potato would not be taken from his pocket until he was where none might see him.

Zenas was profuse in his words of gratitude toward the sergeant, and the latter was so eager to add to his commissions that he urged us warmly to be alongside early next morning.

“The first who come get the cream of the trade,” he said with a laugh, and Zenas replied :

“Then we’ll skim the business in great shape to-morrow.”

The prisoners had disappeared when we pulled away from the landing stage, a full half of our produce having been sold, and I quivering with delight because of my share in carrying out our scheme, for it is to be borne in mind that I alone conceived the idea of thus sending the letter on board.

When we were fifty yards from the prison-ship I would have given vent to my satisfaction, but Zenas said sharply :

“Not a word, Amos. We must not do more than think just now. After we have come to a place where we can spend the night, then will be the time to talk.”

“And where are we likely to tie up?” Reuben asked.

“That is what remains to be decided. First, however, it is necessary that we try to purchase more goods for to-morrow’s trade, and I’m thinking that it won’t be a bad idea to run over to New York, now we’ve got a safeguard from the lieutenant of the Jersey as well as Captain Downes. It is likely that in the city we will be able, by paying extravagant prices, to buy what we need.”

I was almost paralyzed with fear and astonish-

ment at Zenas' audacity. Not satisfied with having done so much toward accomplishing the task set us by Captain Hyler, he counted on going directly into the lion's den, and this was not to my liking.

"There's no sense in tempting fortune," I said impatiently. "Why not let well enough alone, and hide ourselves during the remainder of the day?"

"If any of the Britishers saw us skulking around the shore of the bay it might reasonably be asked why we were eager to keep out of sight, and I claim that we are taking less chances by going to the city as honest traders would be likely to do," Zenas replied in the tone of one who will not brook contradiction, and I made no further attempt at dissuading him.

CHAPTER X.

A PERILOUS MOMENT.

I FIRMLY believed that our unlooked-for success had of a verity turned Zenas' head, otherwise he would not have entertained the dangerous idea of visiting the city where detection was possible, and no real good could come of it.

He had said that by hiding ourselves on the Long Island shore we would fall under suspicion in event of being seen; but there was not one chance in an hundred that we should come across any one, while in the city of New York we must of a necessity meet many, and it was possible we might be seen by more than one Tory from Flushing, in which case we would have come to a speedy ending of our race.

For a moment, as we were rowing toward the town, I had it in mind to argue with Zenas against his thus running all our noses into needless danger, and after what I had accomplished for the good of my family since the morning of leaving Flushing, I had a right to express my opinion.

The words which might have led to hard feelings between us were trembling on the tip of my tongue, when there came into mind an old saying of father's, which is as follows :

“ A poor plan well carried out is better than a dozen good ones half executed.”

Zenas had begun well ; it was his plan that we really turn traders, and he it was who had established such a footing for us with those of the Jersey that we were free to come and go at our pleasure, therefore the lad's scheme should go as he figured it, even though we came to grief in the effort.

I held my peace, resolved not to interfere with anything he might attempt, and the result showed that I was wise in so doing, although before our task came to an end it seemed certain the road we were on led straight to the gallows.

Even when we were at such a distance from Wallabout Bay that it was impossible any person could overhear our words, Zenas refused to speak concerning our real intentions, alleging as a reason for silence on such a point that if we held our tongues while alone, we would be less likely to let fall any incautious words when others were near at hand.

“ We may hug ourselves for having done more

than could have been reasonably expected ; but to crow while we are yet in the woods is poor taste," he said grimly.

"We can at least try to form some plan of action in case the prisoners succeed in sending us word regarding what they may be able to do," I replied quickly, whereupon Zenas said, much as though I was no more than a child who should be reproved for speaking in the presence of my elders :

"It would be a waste of words, for our course can only be determined upon after we know what is possible to those we would save. It is not wise to argue such a question yet."

"And I claim it is less foolish than running our noses into danger when no good can come of it," I retorted almost petulantly.

"But I am counting that good will come of it," he said with an air of wisdom which irritated me yet more. "We may be able to replenish our stock of produce, and by going directly to the city we show those on the Jersey, if there were any aboard who might suspect us, that we are bent only on making money. You agreed, Amos, that I was to be captain, and it is a poor sailor who questions what his commander does."

From that moment until we were at Ten Eyck's

wharf near the fish-market, where were half a dozen idlers who gave but little heed to us when we made the shallop fast, I did not open my mouth.

“I count on going to Fly Market in search of provisions which can be bought at a price that will admit of a profit,” he said carelessly, as if unconcerned whether any might overhear the words. “You two will keep ship, and you are to go with me in order to aid in bringing back what may be purchased,” he said, pointing first to Moses and Reuben, and afterward to me. Then he added, looking at those who were to remain in the boat, “In case you are likely to have trouble because of people who try to take your goods without our price, pull off into the stream, and there wait for us.”

“What about our pass?” Reuben asked.

“You shall keep it, and in case we are questioned, I doubt not but that we can persuade those who have the right, to come down here with us. Do not let yourselves be drawn into arguments with those on shore, for we are likely to make many visits if trade holds good, and it is unwise to take the chances of making enemies.”

I followed him on shore, eying every person

we saw sharply, and he took advantage of the first opportunity to whisper :

“ You are displaying too much suspicion. We should walk along like two lads who have nothing to fear ; by scrutinizing the townspeople too closely you draw attention to ourselves.”

But for the danger of indulging in words just then, I would have retorted that we need not be thus careful of our actions if he had not foolishly ventured into the lion's mouth ; but instead, I bit my lip to keep back the words, and ambled on at his heels like a servant whose time of indenture has not yet expired.

He led the way straight up the wharf to Dock Street, which was lined on either side with citizens who were bent on business, with soldiers decked out in brightest of uniforms finding enjoyment in displaying themselves to those who were little better than prisoners, and the usual complement of loungers.

To my great relief no one gave any special heed to us. It was only when we crowded too near some high and mighty personage that we attracted attention, and the hard words which were flung at us when we offended caused me no distress of mind.

As if he wished to court danger, Zenas insisted

on strolling leisurely around the fish-market, pricing the wares here and there, and then we went up to Queen Street, on which is situated Fly Market.

Here we found a denser throng of people, with a greater sprinkling of soldiers ; but by this time I was beginning to feel more at my ease, and we made our way to the corner of Crown Street with reasonable rapidity.

Zenas set about the work in hand immediately we were come to the market, and to have seen him as he haggled over the prices one would have said that there was never a thought in his head save the earning of money.

By paying two prices or more, we succeeded in buying half a sheep, the tradesman agreeing to cut it into the most convenient shape for selling again, and increased our stock of chickens by six, the whole making a reasonably large load to be carried on our shoulders.

While the butcher was fulfilling his portion of the contract by dividing the sheep into small portions, Zenas must needs stick his nose into the White Horse tavern, which stood hard by the market, and this last venture was like to have been our undoing.

It was in his mind, as he afterward told me,

to hear the gossip of the day with the hope that something might strike our ears which would be of value to Captain Hyler, and to such end we took a seat at the further end of the room where the patrons were seated in greater numbers. We called for two tankards of beer in order that we might not be turned into the street as loungers who cannot pay for the space they occupy, and pricked up our ears for the first word of interest to ourselves.

Luckily my attention was attracted toward the door before we were fairly well established at the table, and then I saw that which caused the cold chills to run up and down my spine.

Two overgrown lads had just entered, taking seats near the window overlooking the street, and in the foremost—he who appeared to be the elder,—I recognized Simon Hunt !

It was as if I had suddenly been turned into stone ; I could not move even a finger, and it seemed certain the Tory cur must have seen us.

After two or three minutes had passed, however, and he appeared bent only on his own affairs, I so far found my senses as to be able to whisper, while I pushed my stool back a few inches to hide myself behind a fat man at the next table :

“Simon Hunt is sitting near the window !”

Zenas remained motionless an instant, and then craned his neck in order to make certain I had spoken the truth.

It was not difficult to satisfy himself regarding the matter, and I noted that he looked decidedly disturbed in mind. Had it not been for the great danger which threatened us through this miserable Tory, I would have said to Zenas that it served him right for having thus foolishly ventured into the city when we might have remained on the other shore.

It was almost a certainty that Simon would espy us before many minutes had passed, and immediately he did so we were the same as prisoners, for I knew full well that the cur would strain every effort to lodge us in the Bridewell. He had only to cry out, and half a dozen whose sympathies were with the king would give him aid, while it was not reasonable to suppose that a single hand would be raised in our defense, because he who interfered must of a certainty proclaim himself an enemy to the invaders.

We were powerless to move. The only exit was near where Simon sat, and it was necessary, if by any lucky chance he failed to see us, to re-

main where we were until it should please him to leave the place.

By moving his stool, much as I had done, it was possible for Zenas to partially screen himself, and this he did without delay, whispering to me later :

“Drink the beer, and in order to give fair reason for remaining, we will order eatables.”

I obeyed him only after some difficulty. The liquid choked me, for in fancy I could already feel the pressure of the rope around my neck, and he who is to be hanged has little desire to tickle his palate.

The miserable Tory had a certain fascination for me ; I dared not raise my eyes from his face, for it seemed to me in the highest degree necessary that I should be aware of the fact immediately he discovered us.

When one of the servants passed near us, Zenas ordered him to bring some roast beef, and after it had been served I could not swallow a mouthful despite all my efforts. I was like unto a person who gazes into his own grave, and however near death may approach me in time to come, I shall never suffer more than I did then.

It seemed to me that a full hour had passed before Simon and his companion were ready to

leave the tavern, and even after the door had closed behind them my fear did not grow less, for I fancied they would loiter around the outside and thus see us when we went out.

It even came into my mind that the villain had already discovered us, and was gone only in order to bring a file of soldiers lest we prove too agile for him to capture without aid.

Zenas, however, was not so timid as I, and fortunate it was, else I might have stayed there until nightfall.

“I will go out alone,” he whispered. “In ten minutes you shall follow. In case you do not find me at the market where we are to get our goods, believe that I have fallen into a snare, and make all haste to warn our comrades. Do not attempt to stay here in the hope that I will come, for you may be certain I have been lodged in jail, and you could render no assistance.”

He paid the reckoning and went out, giving me no time to question his decision, while I remained at the table pretending to eat and drink.

When the time set by my brother had expired, I went out of the tavern in fear and trembling; but to my great relief, no signs of Simon Hunt could be seen.

With all speed I ran to the market, and there

stood Zenas, smiling and confident, awaiting my arrival, with the meat tied in bundles at his feet.

“That was a narrow squeak, and we had best lose no time in getting back to the boat, for Moses and Reuben must be in a fine state of excitement because of our delay,” he whispered.

It is needless for me to say that we gathered up our burdens and set off at once, causing more than one citizen to rail at us because we pressed him too hardly, or occupied more than our share of the walk.

By this time night was come, for we had spent many a precious moment at the fish-market without furthering our purpose in the slightest, and, aside from all other danger, we stood a good chance of being robbed by such idlers as were ripe for any kind of mischief.

Wherever it was possible we ran swiftly, and by such means progressed rapidly, although, excited as I was, it seemed as if we had been an hour or more traversing that short distance.

The shallop was lying at the head of the wharf, while Moses and Reuben were ashore peering anxiously into the darkness in search of us.

“It is high time you arrived,” Moses said in a tone of irritation. “I had just come to the con-

clusion that you were prisoners, and was on the point of crossing over to the other shore."

"We met an acquaintance in the White Horse tavern, and did not care to come out while he sat so near the door, therefore the delay," Zenas replied in a careless tone, whereupon Moses burst forth angrily :

"So! You were taking your ease in a tavern while Reuben and I have been eating our hearts out through fear. I was of Amos' opinion, that we were fools to come here, and had I known what you counted on doing, we'd have remained in Wallabout Bay,"

"Get into the boat," Zenas said, addressing himself to us all, and giving no heed to Moses' anger. "We had best get under way without further delay."

Moses was not disposed to obey, preferring to first give Zenas a piece of his mind ; but I brought him around to duty by whispering in his ear :

"We have come within an ace of being seen by Simon Hunt. We must get out of this town in short order, therefore put a stopper on your grumbling until a more convenient season."

He leaped into the boat in a twinkling, as did Reuben and I, while Zenas was left on the wharf to pass down the goods we had purchased.

As I have said, it was dark, and one could not distinguish objects a dozen feet distant, therefore we only knew that a boat was approaching because of the creaking of oars in their row-locks.

Dimly in the gloom I could make out that the craft had but a single occupant, and he was coming ashore within two yards or less of where Zenas was standing.

The arrival of a boat was nothing in itself to cause alarm, and I gave no particular heed to the fact, being bent on stowing the goods quickly in order that we might the sooner get under way.

Suddenly, I heard what was very like an exclamation of astonishment, followed by one of anger, and before I could scramble on the wharf to learn what had happened, Zenas exclaimed from between his set teeth, as if giving words to his thoughts rather than addressing any one :

“I’ll answer for it that you won’t make more trouble for us, you villain !”

Then came a muffled cry, the noise as of a scuffle, and I leaped on to the timbers of the wharf in time to see my brother struggling with a fellow of about his own size.

It goes without saying that I made all haste to take part in the scuffle, as did Moses and Reuben,

and having come near to the combatants I also gave vent to an exclamation of anger.

It was again Simon Hunt! The Tory cur seemed to have the city of New York in his possession that he should be everywhere we chanced to go.

On drawing near in order to aid my brother, I observed that he was clutching Simon by the throat in such fashion that the villain could not cry out, therefore I made it my business to look after the fellow's legs, and, with Reuben's aid, soon had them bound securely with my waist-belt.

Then we tied his arms while Moses tore off a sleeve of the cur's coat and fashioned it into a gag, which we speedily had between his teeth, thus making certain he could neither move nor speak.

Thanks to Zenas' precaution of gripping him by the throat, there had been no noise, and we passed him down over the wharf together with the fragments of sheep as if he was neither more nor less than so much merchandise.

No one stopped to ask what we could do with the villain; he had recognized Zenas, and his capture became necessary, even though it was like to interfere with the plan which had been begun so neatly in Wallabout Bay.

We were ready to push off from the wharf when the noise of rapid footsteps was heard in the distance, and even as I was unloosening the painter came the cry :

“Simon ! Simon Hunt !”

During an instant we four remained silent and motionless, not daring to push off lest the newcomer should see us even in the darkness and set out in pursuit, thinking his friend had come to some harm, and fearing to stay lest he prove to be an enemy which could not be overpowered as readily as had Simon.

Again the stranger shouted, and Zenas said hurriedly :

“We are bound to take him too, if it so be we can, else he'll raise such an outcry as will bring all the loafers nearabout down on us.”

“We didn't come here to capture Tories,” Moses said in a tone of dissatisfaction.

Zenas did not wait to reply. Simon's friend was approaching rapidly, and as my brother scrambled upon the wharf the stranger, believing he saw Master Hunt, said breathlessly, as if having run long and rapidly :

“I couldn't get here sooner. At first father refused to let me out, saying that it made no difference to him how many Whigs might be in

Wallabout Bay trying to rescue prisoners, for it was the duty of the king's officers to look after them, and not mine."

However much inclined Moses and I might have been to draw back when Zenas proposed to take the second prisoner, we could not hesitate now the fellow had said what gave us to understand that something of what we counted on doing was known to him.

By the time he had come to the edge of the wharf all four of us were upon him, and in a twinkling we had the stranger in as helpless a condition as was his friend.

While we did this, and even in the gloom, I recognized him as the fellow who had been in the tavern with Simon Hunt.

"We'd better get away from this place before more come whom we are bound to capture," Moses said grimly, and Zenas replied, allowing himself to be drawn into conversation even though it might be dangerous :

"It is well we not only came here, but that we were forced to wait until these fellows were ready to leave, else our trading might have been brought to a sudden end to-morrow morning. Throw him aboard, and we'll be gone."

It was Reuben who insisted that the two Tories

be covered with vegetables and meat until it would appear as if we had no more on board than would ordinarily be found in a trader's boat, and I grumbled because of the delay ; but understood ten minutes later what a good turn the lad had done us.

We had hardly more than put off from the wharf and settled down to our work when we heard the sound of oars close at hand, and a moment later a barge came in view from out the gloom.

It was the guard-boat, and but for Reuben's suggestion we would have been caught red-handed.

As a matter of course we pulled up sharply on being hailed, and in reply to the officer's question of why we were abroad at that time of the night, Zenas ordered Moses to show the pass, saying as the Britisher held the paper where the rays of a lantern which he drew from beneath his cloak, would fall upon it :

"We came from Wallabout Bay to purchase provisions for to-morrow's trade, and were delayed in bringing the goods away."

"Why do you leave the city after dark? It is more comfortable in a tavern than on the shore of the bay."

“True, sir ; but it costs much hard cash to stay there, and we are not turned traders for the sport of the thing. Unless we save our money we shall be no better off than if we had remained at home.”

“Even the youngest Yankees are close-fisted,” the officer said with a laugh to the helmsman, and then, giving us back the pass, he ordered his men to give way on the oars.

Another danger had been met and parried. How many times might we run our noses into peril before we would find ourselves prisoners ?

CHAPTER XI.

OUR PRISONERS.

WHEN we were clear of the guard-boat I believe the same thought was in the minds of all—that we could not continue much longer to run into danger without finding ourselves brought up with a round turn, and that turn the noose on the end of a hangman's halter.

I had willingly agreed to Captain Hyler's proposition that we make the attempt at liberating some of the prisoners, and believed such a venture would give me all the perilous excitement I might desire during the remainder of my life, but already had we run into danger after danger, each seeming to be greater than the other, until it would appear that we could not go much further.

Now we were hampered by two prisoners, unless perchance they had already been smothered by the farm produce under which we buried them, and I asked myself how it would be possible to carry out our original plan unless we first made

the long voyage to Smithtown Bay and left there Simon Hunt and his companion ?

This question was also in the minds of all, as I understood a few moments later when Reuben said half to himself :

“Now we are bound to go back to the rendezvous, for these fellows can’t safely be set at liberty, and those poor souls on the Jersey will look for us in vain to-morrow morning.”

“We shall be there, waiting for a message with the hope that they may be able to smuggle one aboard,” Zenas said decidedly, and I asked in bewilderment :

“How may that be ? You can’t take these Tories with you.”

“There is no such thought in my mind, neither do I intend to talk of our plans out here where, for aught we know, may be a boat and crew hidden by the darkness. Not a word is to be spoken save that which all the world may hear, until we are in night quarters.”

“Have you decided where we are to haul up ?” Moses asked, and I fancied there was just a tinge of stiffness in his tone because Zenas was playing the captain in such complete manner that we could not even offer advice.

“I count on camping ashore in the thicket,

if you fellows are willing. I saw two or three promising places while we were coming up this morning."

"So that we are where a portion of this cargo can be taken out, I am not overly particular as to where it may be," Moses said, and then he bent his back to the oars, I following his example.

In silence we two lads rowed while Zenas steered and Reuben stood lookout in the bow, until the shallop grounded on the sand at the southernmost point of the bay where, as it seemed to me in the gloom, was a reasonably stout growth of small timber.

Reuben and I leaped ashore agreeably to the captain's orders, and during ten minutes or more we tramped around and around, until making certain there was no other besides ourselves within a radius of fifty yards or more.

Then Zenas condescended to come on shore, and the boat was pulled well up to high-water mark, after which we gave some little attention to our prisoners.

They were alive, although looking considerably the worse for wear. The faces of both were flushed as if all the blood in their bodies had rushed to their heads, and they appeared decidedly alarmed, as indeed there was good reason.

“Better give them a chance to breathe,” Moses suggested. “We don’t want to kill the lads outright, even though they are Tories.”

“We won’t shed blood unless they attempt to give an alarm, and then I promise that I will brain both without the slightest hesitation,” Zenas said savagely, after which he took the gags from the mouths of the prisoners.

“Remember what I promised,” he said threateningly as Simon, after considerable gasping, appeared about to make some remark. “So long as you keep quiet we’ll make matters as comfortable as possible ; but once show signs of trying to get the best of us, and your death will follow instantly.”

The fellows were yet lying in the boat when these words were spoken ; we had simply pulled away the cargo which covered them from sight, and Simon raised his head as if to peer about him.

“You didn’t dare take us where the rest of your gang are stationed,” he said mockingly, and in an instant I understood what he had counted on doing, for the words of his companion when the latter first came on to Ten Eyck’s wharf, gave me the clue.

Simon had seen some of the lads who were

engaged in the same work as ourselves, and intended to make them prisoners in order to gratify his spite at the same time that he earned the reward offered for the arrest of spies and so-called traitors.

He had not seen us until Zenas fell afoul of him on the wharf ; but, as was only natural, believed we were in company with the others.

These surmises I gave words to, calling Zenas aside lest the captive should hear, and we agreed that it would not be well to undeceive the Tory.

Reuben was minded to make the lads as comfortable as possible ; but instead of being grateful for his efforts, Simon Hunt abused him like a pickpocket, until I took a hand in the matter by clutching the cur's throat as I said to Moses :

“Shove that gag into his mouth ; I'm not reckoning on his being allowed to abuse us, even though it is only with his tongue.”

The miserable villain now showed signs of fear. Having heard what we had previously said regarding the possibility that he might be choked to death by the gag, he counted on our being afraid to use it, save for a few moments at a time, and my proposition to replace it while we were in night quarters, alarmed him.

By the expression in his eyes I understood that

he was most eager to say something, and I motioned for Moses to give him the opportunity.

“You’ll kill me if you keep that gag in my mouth all night,” he whined.

“So much the better,” I said quietly, hoping he would believe I spoke only the truth. “Then we might set it down as an accident, and not charge ourselves with murdering such a reptile. It will be very much better for every Whig in this country, when you are put out of the world.”

“Don’t gag me again ! Don’t gag me !” he cried imploringly. “I promise not to open my mouth, no matter what happens, save when you give permission !”

Instead of replying to him we lifted the Tory cur from the boat and carried him into the thicket, afterward paying the same attention to his companion, and then, before doing anything toward insuring our own comfort, we gathered near the water’s edge to decide upon a course of action for the morrow.

It was certain that there must be some change in our plans now we had two prisoners ; but how the matter might be arranged without seriously interfering with the important task on hand, was more than I could imagine.

“We must make up our minds as to what shall be done in the morning,” Zenas said, when we four stood where the words could not be overheard.

“Why not leave them hidden in the thicket while we attend to our trading?” Reuben asked innocently. “After being properly gagged and bound, I’ll answer for it they won’t interfere with us.”

“In case they were discovered it would be a bad piece of business for us,” Moses said grimly. “I reckon we’d be run up to the yard-arm of the Jersey without much ceremony.”

Zenas had already decided upon a plan, as I understood by his tone when he said :

“The Tories must be left here, and we’ll draw lots to see who shall stay behind to look after them.”

“If a Britisher comes this way, I can’t understand that we’ll be any better off by having a watch over them,” Reuben suggested. “In case one fellow is seen guarding two, you may be certain of an interference, unless he who discovered them chanced to be an arrant coward.”

I also had an objection to this plan proposed by Zenas, which I voiced by saying :

“We warned the prisoners to look for a boat

which had in it four lads. If we go there with only three, even though the canvas patch be on the bow, they'll have good reason for believing that it isn't safe to make an attempt at escape until after hearing from us again, and we can't hope to toss a letter on board under the very noses of the guard every day in the week."

"If either of you lads can think of a plan which will satisfy all except me, I'll be glad to throw my poor scheme to the winds and join in whatever pleases the others. Suppose we get supper now, and while that is being done each one can turn the matter over in his mind?"

Then Zenas acted upon his own suggestion by overhauling the cargo of the shallop until he found the bread and cold boiled bacon with which we had provided ourselves at the house of a friend on the Connecticut shore.

By building a fire we might have prepared a most appetizing meal; but there was altogether too much risk in making a blaze, and we preferred being a trifle hungry rather than add to the chances of discovery.

The prisoners were fed first; but neither of them made a very hearty meal, and the members of our party, although having done a hard day's work, were but little inclined for food. Death

was standing too near at that moment to permit of our taking heed to animal comfort.

An hour later we followed Zenas out on the shore in order to resume the discussion as to how we should continue our task now we were hampered with prisoners ; but no one had hit upon a better plan than that suggested by Zenas, and Moses said after a short time of profound silence :

“ We shall be forced to leave one behind, regardless of what those who are confined on board the Jersey may think, and he who stays will have no pleasant time if we in the shallop are discovered and pursued. It is certain a stop could not be made here, in case the enemy was close at our heels, therefore I believe it should be understood that if we fall into serious trouble, the guard and those two Tories must be left behind.”

To this no one made any reply ; the thoughts which came into our minds were too painful to be given words. Reuben, with the air of one who is in the lowest depths of despair, led the way back to the thicket, and we followed him in silence.

When we had thrown ourselves on the ground near by our prisoners, Zenas proposed that he would stand the first watch, for of course some member of the party must remain awake to keep

guard, promising to arouse one of us when he felt inclined to sleep.

During the night which followed I question if any one of us four who had left Smithtown Bay on the desperate venture of rescuing prisoners from the Jersey, closed his eyes in slumber even during the smallest fraction of time ; we had so much which was mournful to occupy our minds that we could not give way to repose.

Now and then one or another would rise, take a look at the captives, and then walk to the water's edge peering out into the gloom as if expecting to see the enemy close upon us.

With the first light of a new day we were gathered by the side of the shallop, standing in silence, and dreading to hear the proposal, which must soon be made, that we draw lots to decide who was to remain on guard.

Zenas broke the silence by saying almost in a whisper :

“ We are showing ourselves to be faint-hearted, lads. Matters will be none the better for delay, and we had best have done with it at once. I want you to bear in mind, however, that our situation is by no means as desperate as it might be. Simon had seen something which caused him to suspect that an attempt would be made to

release American prisoners ; but it is evident he confided in no one but the fellow whom we brought here with him. Most likely he counted on doing a big thing, by unmasking the plot, and believed a large reward might be gained. He and his companion can do us no harm while they remain here closely guarded, therefore we are so much better off than we would have been but for the visit to the tavern by Amos and me. Instead of feeling downhearted, we ought to be in the best of spirits, since matters are working in our favor, even though we are hampered to a certain extent in our movements."

"We have been trying to look at the situation in the brightest light," Moses interrupted nervously, "and the least said will be the most satisfactory, so far as I am concerned. Let's decide who is to remain as guard over the Tories."

"I will find four twigs, one of which shall be longer than the others, and you three will make your choice, I taking that which remains," Zenas said as he groped about at the edge of the thicket.

"It goes without saying that you can't remain behind !" I exclaimed warmly.

"Why not ?"

"Because you have transacted all the business

thus far, and the sergeant may not be so well disposed toward any of us."

"I shall take my chances with the rest, as is no more than right," Zenas replied decidedly, and then he had the twigs ready for our choosing.

Quickly, with no studying over the matter in order to guess which might be the shortest, each drew a twig from Zenas' hand, and when this had been done the longest was held by Moses.

I hardly dared look toward the lad, fearing lest I should read on his face such bitter disappointment and fear that my heart would be wrung with pity.

He was brave, however, as we soon understood when he said readily, and with no evidence of emotion in his tones :

"I have been thinking all night that the lot would fall on me, and am decided upon a course of action whatever may be the result of your labors. In case you succeed in getting some of the poor fellows from the Jersey, it stands to reason that you can't afford to stop here in order to take me on board, and the same holds true if you are discovered and pursued. Give no heed whatsoever to me ; but keep on with your task, and when you are among our friends once more, send some one here to relieve me, for I shall keep these

Tories close prisoners so long as our provisions hold out, and then three days after the last morsel has been eaten."

Then, and as if he would avoid further conversation, he began taking our private stores from the shallop, and, in addition, his own musket and a small supply of ammunition.

We went through the form of eating breakfast that morning; but I dare venture to say that not one of us swallowed the smallest morsel without a sensation as if it had stuck fast in his throat.

To remain there waiting for the time to come when we might begin trading with those on board the prison-ship, was more than I could well endure, and I whispered to Zenas:

"Let us set off. It is better to row aimlessly around the bay than sit still gazing at Moses, with the knowledge that we are not like to see him again."

He motioned to Reuben, and, without so much as a hand-clasp for our brother, we pushed the shallop into deep water, never turning our heads shoreward as we bent to the oars.

I believed we would never see him again in this world, and did not make any attempt at checking the tears which rolled down my cheeks while I kept stroke with Reuben, my eyes fixed on the

bottom of the boat lest I should inadvertently catch a glimpse of the brother whom we had much the same as sacrificed.

The sun had not yet risen ; it was hardly probable that we would be allowed to come alongside the Jersey until many hours later, and Reuben, who could not naturally be supposed to grieve over the abandonment of Moses as did Zenas and I, asked curiously :

“How do you count on spending the time until we may begin our work ?”

“There is no reason why we cannot lay off a short distance from the prison-ship. So that we do not approach too near, the Britishers can make no serious objection.”

It was a matter of indifference to me where we spent the time, and my brother steered the shallop straight for the Jersey, despite Reuben's insistence that we go ashore near at hand rather than take the chances of disgruntling the Britishers.

When we had come within thirty yards of the hulk whereon was so much of misery, we hauled in the oars, allowing the shallop to be carried by the current wheresoever she might. There was not a breath of air stirring, therefore we could not drift very far from the objective point.

A few moments later the sergeant, who was our partner in the trading enterprise, came to the rail and waved his hand in token that we had been expected, and we could see that he spoke with one of the soldiers who stood guard amidships, most likely explaining to him who we were.

Rather owing to the fact that I had nothing to do, than because of expecting to see anything of especial interest, I kept my eyes fastened on the side of the ship, and after a time came to understand that three or four men were standing behind the bars of a port which had lately been opened.

Suddenly I realized that these must be prisoners, and for the time being I partially forgot my great grief.

Then it seemed to me that one was waving his hand, and at the same instant the shallop was swung around by the current until the patch of canvas on her bow could be distinguished by those on board the Jersey.

Immediately the hand was swung to and fro more violently, and I raised my cap in token that the signal had been seen.

An instant later some small object was flung far out over the water ; but not until ten seconds or more had elapsed did I realize that what I had

seen might be a letter from those whom we were risking our lives to save.

“They have thrown out something for us,” I said in a low tone to Zenas.

“Where is it?” he asked eagerly, turning suddenly toward me; but, fortunately my wits had been sharpened, and I replied:

“Sit still; there is too much risk in my pointing out anything so near the ship! I can see what appears to be a small bit of wood, and on it, or inside, we shall find what we desire. Steer straight for that low hut ashore, three or four points off the Jersey’s starboard bow, and I’ll engage to get it aboard without being seen by those on the spar deck.”

Zenas directed Reuben to let his oars hang lazily over the side while he pulled a stroke now and then, and I overhung the gunwale as if dabbling my hands in the water.

We approached slowly, not daring to row boldly on, and I kept steadily in view the fragment of wood which was being carried astern of the ship by the trend of the current.

It was a full hour before we came up with it, and long before such time had expired Zenas had it in sight.

Slowly we drifted on until I could seize the

object which might be of so much importance to us, and then I remained over the gunwale, not daring to rise suddenly lest my movements be observed by the enemy.

“Stow yourself in the bow, beneath the cabbages, and you will there have an opportunity of reading it without being seen,” Zenas whispered, and I obeyed.

Not until I was thus partially hidden from view did I have a good view of the fragment which had cost us so much time in the getting. It was a bit of sawn board three or four inches square, less than an inch in thickness, and bearing no marks on either side.

“We have made fools of ourselves!” I said petulantly. “This is no more than a piece of wood which littered the deck,” and I was about to cast it overboard again with a feeling of keenest disappointment, when Zenas said sharply :

“Hold on to it! Those prisoners would not throw over the smallest fragment which might be used as fuel, for we are told that they do not have enough with which to cook their food. It has been soaking in the water some time, and in case of having been split in order that a paper could be inserted, would be so badly swollen as to hide every evidence of such work.”

My knife was out in a twinkling, and after considerable cutting and whittling, I succeeded in splitting the fragment, disclosing between the two pieces a folded strip of paper.

CHAPTER XII.

THE ATTEMPT.

BUT for the thought that Moses remained on the Long Island shore with many chances against his escaping with both life and liberty, I could have cried aloud in joy because we had thus succeeded in opening communication when, at the beginning, that had appeared to be the most difficult portion of the task set us.

But for our having run across Simon Hunt and his companion we would have been in fine shape for the task, yet if we had not come upon him, the miserable cur might readily have compassed the downfall of all.

“What is written on the paper?” Zenas asked impatiently as I allowed my thoughts to stray so far from the matter in hand, and I unfolded the missive quickly, disclosing a number of written words which had not been effaced by the action of the water, thanks to the envelope of wood.

The following is what I read in a low tone, speaking each word distinctly in order that my companions might understand it thoroughly :

“God will reward lads who strive to aid their suffering fellow-creatures. On certain nights one or more of the gun-deck ports are left open ; it might be possible that we could manage to file, or wrench aside, one of the bars. It is also possible to slip over the rail now and then. If you count on remaining near at hand during the night, take up a station on the starboard side, in a line with the ship’s foremast. A general delivery cannot be managed ; but four or five might make the venture, swimming out to the shallop. We will make the attempt on this night, and, in case of failure, on each succeeding night until a change is made in the guard.”

There was no name signed to the paper, nor did we expect the writer would think it necessary to thus distinguish himself from the other poor wretches who, doubtless, were ready to make an attempt at escape even though the odds might be great against them.

“Read it once more, Amos,” Zenas said, and I obeyed.

“What does he mean by ‘a change in the guard’ ?” Reuben asked, and Zenas concluded that as the sentinels were then stationed it was possible to make some effort at getting away ; but if they were given a change of posts or dif-

ferent men assigned to the duty, there would be no hope.

“At all events,” my brother said in conclusion, “we know the prisoners are expecting us, and whenever the night is dark enough to admit of our being concealed at a distance of fifty yards, we will lay off the ship according to directions.”

Then there came into my mind the thought that in case we did not succeed in making the attempt on this coming night, we would naturally return to where Moses was keeping guard over the prisoners, and I mentally resolved to propose that I act in his stead during at least one four and twenty hours, in order that the poor fellow might have some relief from his irksome duty, for the most imminent danger was preferable to remaining hidden in the thicket, imagining all the while that his comrades had been forced to desert him.

We did not indulge in much conversation after reading the message from those whom we hoped to lead to liberty. Water is a rare conductor of sound, and prudence dictated that we remain silent while surrounded, so to speak, by the enemy ; but I dare venture to say that each of us kept his mind working most actively.

For my part, I was filled with wonderment that

we had succeeded to such an extent in so short a time. When we started out on the venture it seemed probable that we might be forced to spend many days in the effort to gain communication with the prisoners, and yet, within less than four and twenty hours of actually beginning the task, the most difficult portion of it had been performed.

The prisoners were on the alert, knowing we were close at hand ready to aid them at the first opportunity, and thus had the principal part of our labor been performed. The remainder of the venture depended in a great measure upon what the unfortunate ones themselves would be able to bring about.

We were allowing our craft to drift with the current, believing our temporary partner, the sergeant, would give the signal when the day's work might be begun, and feeling but little interest in the trafficking which was to follow because we no longer had urgent reason for remaining alongside the ship. Having made our presence known to the prisoners, it would be not only distasteful, but in a certain degree dangerous to stay where we might be recognized by such Tories as visited the Jersey to gloat over the unfortunates whom they had sent there.

However, it was absolutely necessary we continue to play the part of traders, and also to be eager in the traffic, in order that we have an excuse for remaining in the bay. To my mind it would be a misfortune if we should be forced to go in search of a fresh supply, since to depart even for a few hours might be to go away at the very time when our people could carry out whatever plans they had formed.

There was no good reason why I should turn over all these possibilities in my mind, however. Matters would go on in their own way despite what we might plan or think, and my speculating would not change them by so much as a hair's breadth.

We drifted about the bay a full three hours before the sergeant gave us the signal to approach, by waving his cap, and then our craft was pulled alongside the gangway in such fashion that the patch of canvas across her bow could readily be seen by those on deck.

The sergeant came down the ladder to assure himself that he was to receive the same percentage on our sales as had been given the day previous, and when this had been settled between him and Zenas we were allowed to dispose of our wares.

To my great displeasure, we had as our first customers half a dozen of the ship's crew, and these we were forced to supply so long as they were willing to pay the price demanded, although it lessened our stock in trade, which we wished to retain as long as possible.

The first prisoner who was allowed to haggle with us from over the rail was a man whom I recognized as having seen more than once in Jamaica. It had been told us in Flushing that he was sent to New York as a prisoner, by Master Downes, and I was wishing most fervently that our message had been shown him by Abel Cummings, when he gave me such a look as told that he understood full well for what purpose we were there.

I answered him by a movement of my eyebrows, and then we knew that he was among the party who had answered our letter, for he said in the tone of one who asks a great favor :

“If you lads can come here nearabout sunset, I shall be able to buy some of your provisions. I am expecting a friend who will bring me money ; he promised to come soon, if it should be possible to get a pass.”

“It might be that we could deliver the goods now, and get the pay after your friend arrives,”

I suggested, whereupon the sergeant cried in a tone of deep concern, most likely fearing lest he would be cheated out of his commission on our sales :

“ Unless you lads wish to be bankrupted in short order, you’ll hold on to your produce until the hard cash is in your hands. There’s never a Yankee aboard who isn’t expecting that some friend or another will bring him money, and yet precious few of them ever see the color of a shilling.”

“ It’ll be all the same to you, sir,” Zenas said to the soldier in a low tone. “ At nightfall we’ll settle as was agreed upon, whether the full price has been paid or not. We’ll look after that end of the business.”

“ I shall hold you to it, lad, and believe you’re too soft-hearted at the same time, for these fellows have a trick of dying, and a dead man doesn’t pay,” the sergeant said with a laugh, and at that instant his attention was attracted to some other portion of the deck, whereupon the prisoner said meanly :

“ Then you will come for your money to-night ? ”

“ Yes, and if your cash has not arrived by that time, we’ll come around every other night until you are able to square accounts,” Zenas replied,

which was much the same as if he had told the prisoner that we would be ready at all times to aid an escape.

Then our man began bargaining for a certain amount of provisions, doing his best to beat us down in price in order that no suspicion be aroused, and the sergeant came back in time to learn the amount of the purchase so he could be certain of receiving every penny we had agreed to give for the privilege of doing business in that quarter.

Had we really been there for the sole purpose of making money by the sale of produce, we would have felt fully repaid by the patronage bestowed upon us during the day, for our goods disappeared over the rail of the ship faster than was agreeable to me ; but in a manner most satisfactory to our partner, the sergeant.

At intervals, longer or shorter, as the case might be, we were forced to pull away from the landing stage when officers came on a visit from the other ships, or those belonging to the Jersey went to the city, and on one of these occasions when we were obliged to lay off at a respectful distance during half an hour or more, Zenas said in a low tone :

“ In case we get rid of our stock in trade this

day and can't do work, we'll go to New York in the morning to lay in a fresh supply. We shall be tired by sunset, and there's no good reason why we should make the journey, until after having had a night's rest."

After this remark had been made I was more easy in mind, for I understood that it was not my brother's intention to leave the bay while there might be a possibility our unfortunate countrymen could carry into effect their portion of the plan.

A ready brain had Zenas, and while he was in command of an enterprise, it might be set down as a fact that not the slightest detail which could aid in the success of a scheme would be neglected. It is little wonder that Captain Hyler came at length to put more dependence in him than in all the other lads of the fleet combined.

I must cut short the story of what we did on this day, lest I err by setting down too many words of little interest when there is so much to be told.

When night came we gave the sergeant his share of the money received, and still had a sufficient amount of goods on hand to give us an excuse for remaining nearabout that bay of misery on the following day. In addition to this, light

clouds had been gathering in the sky during the afternoon, giving promise of that darkness which we most needed in the venture which was well under way.

“We’re likely to have rain before morning,” the sergeant said by way of friendly conversation when Zenas settled accounts with him, and I fervently hoped that he might prove to be a true weather prophet.

During the day we had seen the other boats belonging to our fleet, which had come on the same errand as ourselves ; but they were moving aimlessly about, evidently waiting for something unusual to occur, and I set it down in my mind as a fact, that if the prisoners on board the Jersey waited for relief from them, they were like to grow gray-headed before it came.

When we pulled away from the prison-ship Zenas steered our craft around the craft to starboard that the prisoners might see us if it so chanced they were on the lookout, and I fancied it was possible to distinguish several pallid faces against the bars of an open port watching our boat.

It caused a certain sensation of faintness in my heart as I realized how eagerly and thoroughly the poor fellows were depending upon us who

might not be able to carry out the scheme although it had been so well begun.

We now had at least three hours of idleness before the attempt at escape could be made, and I said to Zenas when we were at some considerable distance from the ship :

“ Why wouldn't it be a good idea to run over and have a word with Moses ? I know the poor fellow would be relieved at seeing us and hearing what we are like to do to-night.”

“ Even though there might be no danger in so doing, I dare say his courage would be none the greater for having said good-by to us once more,” Zenas replied curtly, and I understood that he did not dare risk himself in another parting.

Then Reuben said half to himself :

“ He'll know what we're about to do, because of the clouds which promise to make the night dark, and we would be spending our strength to no purpose by pulling the boat such a distance. If it so chances that any of those poor fellows succeed in breaking jail to-night, I'm of the opinion that we'll need all our wind before the plan is fully worked out.”

“ You're right,” Zenas added approvingly. “ Instead of talking about him, when it can be of no other avail than to make our hearts sore, let

us say just what shall be done in case our venture is worked this night. Suppose that four or five of the prisoners manage to slip through the port ; when we have picked them up the first work will be to lighten the shallop as much as possible by throwing over all our cargo, and then each of us will take a pair of oars. To my mind we had best keep on pulling, in case we are pursued, until all are shot, rather than allow ourselves to be carried back to the ship only that we may be hanged at the yard-arm."

"That is my belief," Reuben replied. "Capture means certain death for us three, and I had rather it came to me by a musket-ball than at the end of a rope."

I said nothing ; it was not agreeable to discuss the best method of dying, when death was really so near at hand, and there was, to my mind, no good reason why we should indulge in such speculations, save as they might be necessary in mapping out our course of action.

From this moment, until we were so near the shore that we could not be distinguished by those on the ship because of the fast-gathering gloom, no one spoke again ; but when it was not possible to make out more than the spars of the Jersey, Zenas gave the word to cease rowing.

“There’s no need of going further away,” he said. “Let the boat drift while we eat supper.”

“I’m not hungry,” Reuben said with a half suppressed sigh, whereat my brother replied angrily :

“Hunger has nothing to do with it. You must eat in order to keep up your strength, and we may not have another opportunity until after many hours have passed.”

We obeyed this order, and I can safely say that it was the most mournful meal I ever shared. By the time each of us had swallowed all that was possible, the night had fully come.

If we could have had the ordering of affairs the weather could not have been more to our liking. The clouds hung low in the sky, and already the rain was beginning to fall ; the chill in the air was so severe that the water froze as it fell, and all hands were soon so benumbed that we longed for the exercise of rowing in order to warm us up.

All this was bad for Moses and his prisoners ; but their bodily suffering could not be as great as ours since the foliage would serve as a partial shelter against the wind, and, at a pinch, a small fire might be built in a hole dug where it could be covered or screened by their bodies.

The guard on the spar deck of the Jersey would not be overly strict, so I figured, for the soldiers would take advantage of every possible shelter, else were they greater fools than I gave them credit of being.

“The wind is coming up in fine style,” Zenas said after a long time of silence, and by the trembling of his voice I knew that his teeth were chattering. “The splash made by a man as he drops into the water should not be heard at any very great distance, and our people will indeed be fortunate if they are unable to make the attempt this night.”

“The poor wretches will freeze if they are forced to stay in this boat very long while their clothes are soaked with water,” Reuben suggested, and Zenas replied grimly :

“Better such a death while endeavoring to escape, than to go out of the world for lack of food. We may as well pull up to the ship, for there’s no chance of our being seen even though the shallop lay close alongside.”

Reuben and I took up the oars, Zenas threshing his arms to and fro as his share of the exercise, and we stole nearer and nearer the ship in which was so much of misery, until we were not more than twenty yards distant from her.

Here we could distinguish only the riding lights and the glow from the cabin windows ; all else was shrouded in darkness so profound that I began to fear we might not be able to make out the head of a swimmer until he was close aboard of us.

If the sentinels paced the deck, we were ignorant of such fact because of not being able to see anything smaller than the shadow of the ship itself ; but I felt confident that there was never a Britisher so devoted to duty as to expose himself to the freezing rain.

We lay off the ship on the starboard hand with two pairs of oars in the row-locks, but not daring to whisper, and I even imagined that the chattering of our teeth might be heard in case the Britishers were on the alert.

After remaining here half an hour or more Zenas began to realize, as he afterward told me, that it would be impossible for us to see a man if one dropped over the side of the ship, and, fearing lest our countrymen might make the attempt at escape only to be drowned, he gently sculled the shallop with the steering-oar until she was within less than a dozen feet of the ship.

Here, even though it had been broad day, we would have been hidden from view unless one

craned his neck over the rail, because of being sheltered by the ship's side, and in such position it was possible to make out faintly the outline of the ports.

How long we remained there waiting for the prisoners to do their share of the work I am unable to say ; it seemed to me as if we had been motionless two hours or more, although as a matter of fact it could not have been half as long, when I was startled almost into an exclamation of surprise by seeing that for which we had been waiting so feverishly.

A dark form suddenly appeared extended from one of the ports downward to the water, and even as I gazed it dropped, disappearing from my view.

The prisoners had succeeded in opening the way to freedom, and the first of those who would escape was already in the water.

Zenas had seen all that was presented to my view, and he swung the bow of the shallop yet nearer the ship.

Reuben and I stretched our bodies far out over the gunwale, searching with our eyes for the swimmer, and even while thus engaged I understood, rather than saw, that a second prisoner was letting himself down from the port.



We worked as do those who know that death is hovering near, heedless of all else for the time being.—Page 245.

Amos Dunkel.

Now was our work cut out for us ; I managed to get a hand-hold on the hair of the first man, who proved to be Abel Cummings, and towed him to the bow lest the shallop should be upset if I attempted to take him in at any other place.

Before my task was finished Reuben was engaged in the same work, and my man was hardly more than over the gunwale before I saw Zenas clutch a third who was willing to brave death in an effort to escape.

We worked as do those who know that death is hovering near, and heedless of all else for the time being save the task in hand.

When I had an opportunity to look about me five men were crouching in the bottom of the shallop, loading her so deep in the water that anything in the nature of a swell would have swamped us off-hand, for our gunwale was no more than a couple of inches above the surface.

Surely it was time we looked after the safety of our passengers and ourselves ; but yet Zenas gave no token that he was ready to leave that most dangerous place. It was not probable we could remain there many moments longer without hearing an alarm caused by the disappearance of such as had taken refuge with us, and, trembling with nervous fear, I leaned over the man nearest, who

was the prisoner from Jamaica, asking in a whisper :

“How many of you were in the secret ?”

“Six. There is yet one to come. He remained until the last to do what he could toward screening us from view.”

I was in an agony of apprehension, as well I might be, for now were we in as much danger from friends as from foes.

If some of the more desperate prisoners learned of what was going on, they might make a break, when our craft would be swamped, or discovered while she remained so near alongside that the Britishers could readily shoot us down.

“Was it agreed that he should linger many seconds ?” I asked, after having remained silent while one might have counted ten.

“He was to follow close at our heels.”

I would willingly have given anything in my possession if Zenas would give the signal to begin the flight, and yet had I been in command it is likely I would have hesitated, as did my brother, for there came before my mind's eye a picture of this sixth man dropping over the ship's side after we had pulled away, and drowning because of having trusted in our keeping faith.

I began slipping into the water such portion

of our produce as could be come at most handily, in order to lighten the shallop, keeping my eyes fixed meanwhile on the yawning port above my head, and was thus engaged when a sharp report rang out, sounding to my excited senses as loud as any cannon, while almost at the same instant came a shrill cry as of a strong man in mortal agony.

CHAPTER XIII.

FOR LIFE.

WE in the shallop did not need to be told that he whom we had been waiting for would never in this world answer a summons, and with such knowledge came a sense of our own danger, greater and more overpowering than can be described by words.

It seemed almost certain that the side of the ship would, in a twinkling, be hung with lanterns in order that those who had made their way through the port might be seen, and when this should be done we were lost.

At the instant I was conscious only of an intense desire to pull the boat out into the darkness, and the knowledge that within a very few seconds we would serve as targets for the soldiers on board the Jersey ; but, afterward, I came to understand how wise Zenas had been when he mapped out in advance the part each of us should play at the decisive moment.

At that instant I question if I could have un-

derstood a command, even though it had been bawled into my ear ; but without really knowing what I did—mechanically, so to speak, I performed the task before us in accordance with a certain mental prompting over which I had no control.

The oars were already in the row-locks ; straightening my body, I grasped them and began to pull, glancing quickly in front and behind me to catch stroke with my comrades when they were ready to begin the race.

Thus it was that the shallop had moved a dozen feet or more from the side of the Jersey when Zenas and Reuben were in position to perform their share of the task, and in a very few seconds after hearing the report of the musket, the three of us were rowing for dear life.

There was little need for us to have a care lest our oars rattle in the row-locks ; there was such a tumult on board the Jersey that we might have shouted without fear of being overheard, and Zenas said to the man nearest him :

“You and your comrades had best throw overboard all the produce that can be come at. The boat is full deep in the water for speed, and we shall be the gainers for every ounce of weight you can pitch out.”

I can well fancy that the men were glad of an opportunity for action ; to have remained inactive at such a time must have been terrible for one's nerves, and my brother had hardly more than signified his desire before all five were groping around in the bottom of the shallop searching for such of the cargo as might not be needed.

Then through the mist formed by the rain we saw many lanterns flash out, and while I was saying to myself that we need have no fear regarding such a feeble illumination as that, a jet of flame spouted out from the side of the ship, throwing into sharpest relief against the black sky our boat with all her living freight.

An alarm gun had been fired, and it also served to search us out as nothing else could have done.

“Bend low ; but pull your best !” Zenas cried in a low, sharp tone, and even as he spoke the rattle of musketry rang out. I could hear the whistling of the bullets as they flew over our heads, and yet strangely enough, as it then seemed to me, no one was hurt.

An instant later we could hear the word of command from the ship, and another shower of bullets passed over and all around us without inflicting injury.

I was literally dazed because we had escaped

instant death, and heard as if from afar off Zenas' warning cry :

“Pull for your lives, lads ! We can soon be out of range !”

It was to me as if I had the strength of two men ; the oars seemed to bend almost double under the strain I put upon them, and the hissing of the water beneath our boat's bow was like unto the whirl of a saw through soft wood.

The bay which had been so quiet a few seconds previous, was now a scene of excitement such as I had never before witnessed. From every craft, whether prison-ship or dingy transport, lights flashed, and out of the side of each man-of-war poured a long tongue of flame as every one in turn discharged a gun of alarm.

Where a moment ago nothing could be seen but the shadowy outlines of spar and hull as they were partially veiled by the driving mist, lights were twinkling until it was as if every square yard of the bay had been illuminated.

Faintly, when the wind lulled ever so slightly, could be heard shouts of command, and even those on the shore had caught the infection, for we could see plainly that people were running to and fro with lanterns as if fleeing for their lives.

Surely Moses, who would not have failed to

keep a lookout when the storm set in, knowing full well we would make the attempt if possible, must have full knowledge of what had happened, and it did not require any great stretch of imagination to picture his distress, caused chiefly by suspense.

Of a verity had I been in his place and he in mine, I would have set it down as a fact that the venture had gone awry, because it did not seem as if we could escape after the enemy were so thoroughly aroused to our purpose.

“They killed poor Bartlett!” one of our passengers said with a sigh, as he pushed at my oars in the hope of increasing the speed ever so slightly, “and it stands to reason we will have all the boats in the bay pursuing us before many minutes have passed.”

“Are you armed, lads?” another asked grimly, and Zenas replied, trying in vain to impart a cheery ring to his voice :

“Aye, sir, and with ammunition in plenty.”

“Then we’ll fight to the death, for I’m not minded to be taken back to that terrible place alive.”

“That’s about the way we’ve figured it out, sir,” Zenas said as he tugged like a giant at his oars. “It’s hanging for us if we’re caught, and

before beginning the work this night we decided that it was better to be shot down while struggling for life, than to slowly choke at the end of a rope."

Then came a time of silence lasting ten seconds, perhaps, and one of the escaping prisoners asked abruptly :

"How did it happen that you risked your lives to save those who were strangers?"

"Captain Adam Hyler set us about the task, and we were all the more willing, speaking now for myself and my brothers, because of having sworn fealty to the king not so many days ago."

"Where was your home?"

"Flushing. Our father is Seth Dunkel."

"I know him well for an honest man ; but supposed him to be devoted to the king."

"So he was until General Woodhull was so basely murdered, and then he believed it was time to change his coat. We——"

At that instant I, having my eyes fixed upon the tracery of spars which I knew represented the Jersey, saw a belching of flame from her side, and while my eyes were yet dazzled by the sight I heard the roaring of a large body in the air above me.

"They've opened the big guns," Reuben said in

a matter-of-fact tone as if he was accustomed to such pleasantries, "and even though they fail of sinking us, the glare of the burning powder serves to show our whereabouts."

It was impossible to increase the speed. Everything save the weapons and ammunition had been thrown overboard in order to lighten the shallop, and we could do no more or no less than allow them to work their will. That we would finally come out with our lives I did not believe; it seemed certain we must be swamped or killed by a ball, and timorous though I naturally was, at this time the supposed fact did not disturb me greatly.

No one on board the shallop spoke during the next two minutes, and then another gun was discharged; but this time we failed to hear anything of the ball. In the glare, however, I could make out two boats filled with men, and pulling directly toward us.

"The chase has begun," Zenas said quietly, "and before many moments they will be forced to give up using the big guns, or take the chances of killing their own men."

"I hope they may continue to use them until having made certain we did not stop anywhere along shore, otherwise Moses will be in trouble."

“Have you another comrade near at hand?” one of our passengers asked, and in a few words Zenas explained the situation.

“You are brave lads,” the man said emphatically, “and my one hope is that I may be able, some day, to give better proof of gratitude than can be done by mere words.”

“It is enough for us if we get you safely away, sir; but I’m thinking that soon all hands of us will be where gratitude as known in this world, is of but little account.”

Then it was that Reuben aroused himself to say in a tone of conviction which heartened me wonderfully :

“I’m counting on remaining in this life many a day, even though an hundred or more Britishers are in the chase. What chance have they, while night holds so dark, of overtaking us. We know every turn of the river, while most likely they’ve never been half a mile north of Wallabout Bay; if we don’t make good our escape, it will be because of our own carelessness, or the result of an accident which couldn’t have been foreseen.”

“Good for you!” Zenas cried. “That’s the sort of talk we’re needing just now, and you shall make us believe that Moses will pull through all right.”

“I’ve got a plan in my head which I’m thinking will work fairly well for him.”

“What is it?” I asked eagerly, for at this time when we were in such peril, my keenest fears were regarding him.

“I’ll save my breath in order to pull the better, and when the time comes that we may hold up, you shall hear what I’d do to help the lad if I was in command.”

The storm was increasing in force each instant; the wind howled and shrieked until we might have passed within half a musket-shot of our pursuers without betraying our whereabouts by the thud of the oars, while the rain, coming down in more volume, formed a curtain which hid everything outside a radius of a few yards.

It was just the night for work such as ours, and as I grew sufficiently calm to understand what was going on around me, I realized that the chances were decidedly in our favor.

It was no longer possible to distinguish anything in the direction from which we had just come. The second discharge of the big gun was the last, so far as we knew, and I could not believe the British soldiers would pull their heavy boats any very great distance against such big odds, for it

was as if the elements were conspiring against them.

None but those who were fleeing for their very lives would have kept to the river at such a time, when there was indeed danger that they might freeze to death.

Such thoughts as these had just shaped themselves in my mind when Zenas gave the word to slacken speed.

“There is no reason why we should wind ourselves when the enemy cannot be seen. Pull moderately till we get our breath once more, and then, if it seems necessary, we can put on another spurt.”

Then it was that the prisoners insisted on taking our places at the oars in order to quicken the chilled blood in their veins. Their clothing was sodden with water, and I could understand that to give them an opportunity for exercise would be no more than a favor, therefore I readily yielded up my oars to the man nearest.

My comrades did the same, and when we three were comparatively idle, save that Zenas took upon himself the task of steering, Reuben said slowly, as if broaching some subject which was not of very great importance :

“Do you lads remember that when we came

down this way, after having taken our produce on board, we saw a house not far from the mouth of Wallabout Bay ?”

“I recall it to mind,” Zenas said quickly. “It was little better than a log shanty.”

“Aye ; but in front of it, on the shore, did you note a skiff of much the same size of this boat ?”

“Yes, that I saw, and wondered why the owner left her where she might readily be stolen.”

“Well,” Reuben continued, “it is my plan that you set Amos and myself on shore in order that we may steal the boat.”

“We are two miles or more beyond the house.”

“It won’t be any very hard task to walk back ; by following the shore we shan’t run the risk of going astray.”

“But a craft like her isn’t worth the stealing. Captain Hyler already has as many small boats as he can use conveniently.”

“It wasn’t in my mind that he would care for her. With these men whom we have rescued, you’ve got crew enough to take the shallop into Smithtown Bay, and if we get hold of another craft, Amos and I can go back for Moses and his prisoners. This is just the night for such work, and I’ll guarantee that we can put many a good

mile between all hands of us and Wallabout Bay before the storm clears away."

In a twinkling I understood all that Reuben would do, and my heart went out to him as it never had to any other human being save my mother.

He had shown us a way by which Moses might be brought off before the Britishers could begin a search alongshore, and but for the fact that it was not convenient to move about while the shallop was loaded so heavily, I would have hugged the quick-witted lad.

Zenas understood at once what this comrade had proposed, and said with deepest feeling :

"I won't forget, Reuben, that it was you who first showed us what might be done toward aiding my brother. When is it your idea to be set ashore?"

"The sooner the better, unless Amos wants more of a tramp than is necessary. There can be no danger in heading for the beach now, and once we two have left you, the shallop will pull more easily."

Zenas listened intently for a few seconds in order to make certain he could not hear the oars of the enemy, and then swung the steering-oar hard down, bringing our craft around on her heel.

Almost any other lad would have been at a loss to lay the proper course while it was so dark that he who sat in the stern-sheets could hardly more than distinguish the form of his comrade in the bow ; but Zenas was one who could "feel the channel," my father often said, and I never knew him to be at fault however dark the night.

"We must take one pair of oars," Reuben said when we were supposed to be heading for the shore. "It isn't certain we shall find any in the boat, and even if we do, two pairs won't come amiss."

"Take everything you want," Zenas said impulsively. "It is unfortunate that in our desire to lighten the shallop we threw all the provisions over."

"We'll contrive to get along without anything save the oars and our muskets. As for food, Moses has a supply with him, and we shan't suffer."

"Cease rowing !" Zenas cried when, strain my eyes as I might, I could see no signs of our being near the shore, and in another instant the boat's bow grated on the sand.

Reuben looked after our outfit ; that is to say, he selected the stoutest oars, made certain we had

an ample supply of powder and ball, and handed me my musket as he said :

“ We’ll load the weapons before starting, for I’m not minded to be stopped on the way by either Tory or Britisher. Push off, Zenas ; there’s no good reason why you should linger for us, who need to put as many miles as possible between you and Wallabout Bay before morning. Amos and I are in good trim for the tramp ; we’re not heavily loaded, and the frost in the air will force us to strike out at a lively pace.”

Those whom we had rescued would have spoken many words to us in parting ; but Zenas put an end to the conversation by saying sharply :

“ We don’t indulge in anything of that kind, gentlemen. A fellow’s courage might be shaken by a simple word at such a time.”

“ I’ll guarantee that there’s nothing which can shake the courage of you lads !” the man said emphatically, and Reuben cut the parting short by shoving the shallop out into the river.

We stood there only so long as was necessary in order to load our weapons, and then Reuben said as he tucked the musket under his coat in such a manner that the flint and pan would be protected from the rain :

“ I count on leading the way, and you shall

follow close behind. We've no concern with what may lie to seaward ; but must keep our weather eye lifting for that boat. I don't care to walk any further than is necessary."

Even though it might have been perfectly safe to do so, I was not in the humor for walking, therefore we began and continued the march without speaking a word until we came upon the boat which Reuben had noted when we rowed down the river.

In her was a fairly good pair of oars, a small sail, and some lines for fishing. From appearances I would have said that her owner was a poor man, who most likely gained a livelihood by fishing, and under almost any other circumstances I could not have had the heart to steal her ; but it was to save the life of my brother, and there could be no hesitation even though the crime had been much greater.

"Now it stands us in hand to know who may be ahead of us," Reuben said as he pushed the skiff off and leaped into her. "I'm not counting that there's any chance the Britishers may yet be in pursuit of their late prisoners ; but, it is possible, and we don't care to run afoul of them."

"Take the steering oar, Reuben. You shall be

captain, and I'll do the rowing. It's your venture, and my part is simply to obey orders."

"It's a venture in which we share and share alike," the dear lad said stoutly; but, realizing that we could make better speed if some one stood at the helm, he gave me the first trick at the oars.

Half an hour later, when he was thoroughly chilled and I warm with exercise, we shifted work, and then it was that, for the first time since leaving Zenas, I realized how cold was the air.

The rain and the frost combined to give us a thick coating of ice over our clothing, and when one remained inactive a few minutes he soon had good proof that it was anything rather than a pleasant night in which to be abroad.

From this time on we changed tasks as often as once every ten minutes until we were come, at near about midnight, to the vicinity of where we had left Moses.

Now it was necessary that we land and search for the lad, and, pulling the skiff up beyond reach of the tide, we went forward, stopping every dozen yards to call Moses' name.

What with the howling of the wind and the swish of the rain, it was not likely he would be

able to hear us from any great distance, therefore this portion of our venture progressed very slowly ; but, fortunately, came to a successful end finally.

It seemed to me as if we must have gone half around the bay and were opposite the prison-ships, when we heard an answer to our hail, and in another instant I was clasped in my brother's arms.

“Where is Zenas ?” he asked tremulously, after peering into Reuben's face. “Did they get him ?”

“No, and I'm counting that it'll be many a long day before they round the lad up with a short turn. He's on the way to Smithtown Bay, with a crew of five whom we rescued from the Jersey,” I said triumphantly.

“But I heard them firing at you !”

“Aye, Moses ; but it's one thing to shoot, and quite another to hit the target. The escape was discovered after five had been taken on board the shallop, and then we gave the Britishers the slip.”

Even now the dear lad could not understand the situation because of the fact that we two stood before him, and I was forced to tell the entire story before he was satisfied.

Then he gripped Reuben by the hand to show that he appreciated the friendliness, and led us into the thicket where were his prisoners covered with boughs to keep the rain from them.

“We’re bound to set off at once, Moses,” I said, when the lad sat down on the wet ground as if it was his purpose to hear yet more regarding our work. “This shore will be swarming with redcoats by sunrise, and we must be many a good mile away by that time.”

“What with the provisions and spare ammunition, there’s quite a load to be carried to your skiff,” he said musingly, and Reuben took charge of affairs by crying :

“Load up the prisoners, for it’s no more than right they should have some part of the work, and let us set out. I shan’t feel really comfortable in mind until we’re well past Oyster Bay.”

As Reuben suggested, so we did, although Simon Hunt made a great ado because we forced him to carry a portion of the food which he would consume, and, as nearly as I could guess, it was about two o’clock in the morning when we embarked in the skiff, the prisoners lying in the bottom of the boat securely bound, Moses and Reuben at the oars, and I steering with a bit of board we had found in the bow.

CHAPTER XIV.

SMITHTOWN BAY.

It is not to be supposed that we spent our breath in talking, once the skiff was under way. We had good reasons for pushing on at the top of our speed until sunrise, when it would be necessary to go into hiding because we had no pass to show in event of running upon a Tory or British craft.

It was reasonable to suppose the British would search the shores of the bay next morning, in the belief that there would be found some token of those who had planned the escape, and it was not beyond the bounds of probability that, failing in their purpose, a reconnoissance might be made even as far as Long Island Sound.

It stood us in hand to get through Hell Gate before the day had fairly dawned, and once over the rapids there were hiding-places in plenty where we might remain many hours without fear of being discovered.

The chief thought in my mind, and I afterward

came to know that my comrades were troubled from the same cause, was that our success had rendered most dangerous the position of the other boats from Captain Hyler's fleet.

We knew that the two skiffs, whose occupants had been bent on the same business as ourselves, were somewhere in Wallabout Bay on the evening we brought our task to a successful conclusion, and it was certain they had not been able to effect their escape.

It stood to reason that the lads had understood the meaning of the sudden commotion ; but if, as I believed, they were between the prison-ships and the shore, or, what was more likely, in some shelter on the island, there was no hope of their being able to get away until the Britishers had settled down once more.

All this was in my mind as we tugged at the oars during the remaining hours of darkness ; but not until we were in a place of comparative safety did I give words to the thoughts.

In order that each of us might get a sufficient amount of exercise to prevent him from suffering with the cold, we changed places every ten or fifteen minutes, and thus it was that we were fresh—even eager—for the task all the time.

The rain continued ; the wind, which had been

from the eastward, began to veer toward the north, and the temperature was falling each hour.

When finally we were come to Hell Gate, as the night was giving way to a new day, Moses took command of the skiff, for he alone was capable of navigating that dangerous water-way.

I plied a pair of oars ; Moses held one of the others as a rudder, and Reuben stood in the bow to fend off if by any misadventure our frail craft ran too near the jagged rocks.

The passage was made without difficulty. I felt certain such would be the case while my brother was at the helm, and then we continued the journey until the day was fully come, when Moses steered the craft into a tiny cove where we might lie safely hidden unless, perchance, search was made alongshore.

The sun had cleared away the clouds ; the rain ceased ; but the air was full of frost, and I looked forward to a day of suffering, for it was necessary we remain hidden without opportunity of taking exercise.

Moses had a plan of his own, however, which was the same he had adopted while lying concealed on the shore of Wallabout Bay.

A small pit was dug—not without difficulty be-

cause of the frost—within the thicket, and over this, bottom up, we placed the skiff. Then a fire of twigs was built, and in less than half an hour all hands of us were as snug and comfortable as could be desired.

As with our bodies, so it was with our minds.

We had the supreme satisfaction of knowing that our venture had been well planned and perfectly executed ; that we were in a fair way of rejoining our comrades without having suffered any loss, and, what was far better, after having released from a living death five countrymen whose only crime was that of a desire to free the colonies from the rule of the king.

Surely we three lads had good cause for contentment.

Reuben overhauled the stores, and dealt out a hearty breakfast for all hands ; the prisoners were partially freed from their bonds, after having been warned that death would be the penalty of their making any outcry, and, but for the thought of those of Captain Hyler's company who yet remained nearabout the prison-ships, I should have enjoyed myself most thoroughly.

Simon Hunt did not venture to make any complaint ; but his companion, whose name we learned was David Lombard, appeared to feel

particularly aggrieved because we had deprived him of his freedom. He protested against being thus held prisoner, and had much to say regarding the revenge which his people would take upon us when the Britishers had reduced the rebellious colonists to subjection.

“Yet you counted on capturing us, whom you had never seen, simply that so many dollars of blood-money might be earned,” I said, angered by the high and mighty airs the fellow displayed.

“That was only what a loyal subject should do,” he replied stubbornly.

“And do you think that a Yankee has absolutely no right to protect himself?”

“He hasn’t if by so doing he goes counter to the wishes or commands of his majesty.”

“Then in your opinion we should have tamely submitted to being made prisoners when you and Simon Hunt announced your purpose?” I asked with a laugh which had in it more of anger than mirth.

“You are rebels and as such should submit when those in authority demand submission,” he replied with an air of superiority which yet further excited my anger, whereupon Moses, understanding that I was fast losing temper, said good-naturedly :

“Why bandy words with such a thick-head, Amos? It is enough that we have him fast, and will soon turn him over to those rebels who can give convincing proof that they, as well as his majesty, have prisons and men to guard them.”

“You will soon come to repent of your ways,” the lad said in a tone of conviction, and I turned my head away lest I might be tempted to do that which the Britishers were not afraid of doing—ill-treat a prisoner.

Then, to change the subject of conversation, I spoke of that which had been almost constantly in my mind since this last stage of the journey was begun.

“What about those of Captain Hyler’s company who set out with the same purpose we did?” I asked. “May we not have rescued five prisoners only to give the enemy eight others?”

“What do you mean?” Moses asked in surprise.

“The lads who manned the other boats belonging to Captain Hyler’s fleet were in Wallabout Bay when the escape was discovered, and it is not likely they had any opportunity of getting away. Not knowing what was being done, nor where we might be, they must have remained in hiding

while search was being made, and this morning finds them where it is likely they'll be called upon to give a strict account of themselves."

It seemed as if Moses and Reuben had not given this possibility a thought, for straightway they fell silent, and the Tory cub Lombard showed evidence of most intense satisfaction.

"So it ever will be. Those who rebel against his majesty must always get the worst of the bargain, as your Mr. Washington has come to understand by this time."

"Hark you, Master Tory!" I cried, now nearly beside myself with rage. "Take my advice and keep a still tongue, else I may be tempted to give you the same dose which that brute of a Cunningham deals out to honest men, even though I should afterward be ashamed of myself for all time to come. It is said that in New York helpless prisoners are flogged, and the same may happen out here in the open, unless you grow wiser!"

This threat, and the Tory must have understood that I meant all I said, reduced Lombard to silence, and Moses said thoughtfully:

"We cannot be blamed for having brought trouble upon those who manned the other boats. It was Captain Hyler's suggestion that each crew

act independently of the other, and even though we were so disposed, it would have been impossible for us to have explained our plans without putting them in jeopardy. If those poor lads are captured it is the fortune of war, and cannot now be mended."

Then Reuben, whose heart I doubted not was sore with the thought that his friends were, or soon might be, in the hands of the enemy, put an end to the conversation by suggesting that we take advantage of the opportunity to sleep. One was to remain on guard while two gave themselves up to rest, and the sentinel would be relieved every hour, thus insuring an equality of labor and repose.

It is needless that I go over in detail all the doings of our small party during the day.

We saw neither friend nor foe, and when the shadows of evening began to lengthen, were in good condition for a full night's work.

During the hours of darkness we pulled steadily, using all the oars, and changing places at regular intervals in order that the helmsman might spell the others.

Then came another day in hiding, and another night's work. In such fashion was the journey continued until we entered Smithtown Bay, and

were hailed by the sentinel on duty, for Captain Hyler held the encampment under strict military rules.

I would it might be possible for me to set down, so that he who reads could picture the scene, that which was said and done when it was known we had arrived ; but the task is far beyond my poor powers.

Zenas and my father were the first to greet us. Then came the five prisoners who had been rescued ; and following them was Captain Hyler himself.

Every man in the encampment seemed to think it necessary he should speak some word of praise, and by the time we were at liberty to settle down there was great fear lest we had been so puffed up by pride as to render us practically useless for further work.

Now it was that, after we had told our story and delivered the two prisoners into the log jail where it was certain they would be securely held, we began to ask questions, and continued at such occupation until having learned all that had been done during our absence.

Zenas and the liberated prisoners arrived safely at the encampment with no further adventure than that of being chased, just at nightfall, by

the guard-ship on duty at the mouth of Oyster Bay. Thanks to the darkness, which shut in shortly after the Britishers had sighted the shallop, the enemy were soon lost to view, and from that time on the fugitives had no other trouble than that of pulling the heavily laden boat against a head wind.

We also understood that Captain Hyler and his men had not been idle.

They had made an expedition against the Tories in Jamaica, and brought off stores, clothing, and hard cash to such an amount that each man received as his share, after a full half had been taken for the general fund, no less than eight dollars.

Therefore it was that we Dunkels found ourselves in possession of more money than we had ever before owned at one time. Surely this whale-boat navy was something not to be despised by either Whig or Tory ; it was self-sustaining, and he who joined was not continually figuring as to when his time of service should expire that he might go home for a while.

If General Washington could have enlisted recruits as did Captain Hyler, then of a verity would the so-called rebellion have been triumphant in far less time than was afterward required.

Captain Downes still remained a prisoner. The British refused to exchange even a single American prisoner for him, and the Tories did not appear to grieve very much because he was kept in confinement.

Elijah Cornwall, he who had carelessly allowed Simon Hunt and Micah Williams to escape on the day when we captured Lieutenant Colonel Emerick, was the only one out of all that company who did not appear eager to welcome us who had lately come from Wallabout Bay, and I set down his offishness to shame at having let Simon slip through his fingers so readily ; but came later to understand the true reason, after which I was convinced that he and the Tory Hunt were in a plot together, even at that early day when we had full confidence in him.

The Princess was yet in our hands, and Captain Hyler had no idea of giving her up to those friends of the king who claimed to own her. She was a handy craft, particularly if it so chanced that we wanted a quick run outside, and a valuable addition to our fleet. My father had been appointed captain of her, and since Captain Hyler had promised that we Dunkels should work together, I had little doubt but that my brothers and myself would sail in the sloop many times before the winter was

so far advanced that the water-ways would be impassable.

A few hours after our arrival Reuben came to me with the information that he had seen Elijah Cornwall conversing eagerly, and in a friendly manner, with Simon Hunt, through the window of the prison, and although this news gave me no uneasiness at the time, I wondered how it was a Whig could descend so low as to put on a pretense of friendliness with one who was as bitter against the colonists as Simon had ever showed himself to be.

“Perhaps he is trying to learn how the Tory gave him the slip,” I said with a laugh, when Reuben had come to an end of his budget. “Of course there’s no chance Elijah would play the traitor?”

“I don’t think so badly of him as that ; but it is strange that ’Lige should show friendliness for the villain when he has hardly given us a welcome home after all the dangers we encountered.”

“Keep your eyes and ears open, Reuben, and I will do the same. If it so be there is any mischief brewing we’ll soon come to the bottom of it,” I replied carelessly enough, for I could not have been persuaded then that Elijah would do the slightest wrong to the Cause.

It would have been farwiser had we two lads gone directly to Captain Hyler at that moment, as was our duty, for then much trouble would have been saved our company ; but we were not yet the good servants of the colonists we believed ourselves to be.

“We won’t have much of a chance to watch ’Lige, for I’m told that he is to leave the encampment to-morrow morning on a scout. The captain counts on worrying the Tories hereabouts as much as possible, and we must have spies out in order to know where a successful blow can be struck,” Reuben said placidly, and this last bit of information was sufficient to quiet my mind if it had been disturbed, which was not the case.

Half an hour later, that is to say, after supper had been eaten and all hands were gathered around a roaring fire in the main building which served as barracks, Captain Hyler gave further proof of the care he exercised over his men, by calling upon any of them to suggest what might be done to aid those whom we had left on the shores of Wallabout Bay.

“They are in sore straits through having manfully done their duty, and if we can lend a helping hand it must be done.”

No one made reply ; most likely because, like

myself, all were at a loss to know how anything might be accomplished.

Then the captain called upon Zenas for an opinion, and the lad said that which I would have put into words had I been as quick-witted as he.

“It is certain no help can be given unless a party goes there by land, for I’m inclined to think the Britishers will be more than usually careful in examining passes after what we’ve done, and its certain that he who tries to trade with the prisoners will be called upon to prove himself loyal to the king in some other way than by giving his word to that effect.”

“It stands to reason they went ashore when the alarm was given,” Moses added. “That is what I would have done had I been in the same position, and if they did land, it would be much like searching for a needle in a haystack to look for them.”

After some considerable talk it was decided that we could do nothing to aid the poor fellows ; they must work out their own escape, if indeed they were yet free, but the general opinion was that one or more had already been taken.

I noted the fact, giving but little heed to it at the time, that Elijah Cornwall listened eagerly to every word which was said ; but without taking

part in the conversation. There were many others who did the same, therefore it is not strange that I paid no especial attention to the interest he manifested.

We had come to an end of the subject, mournful though it was, and were speaking of what might be done to harass the enemy near at hand, when the sentinels reported that two men were near at hand in a skiff, and ten minutes later we were welcoming the messengers who had been sent to General Washington.

They had performed the perilous journey in safety ; were accorded an interview with the Virginian gentleman who was at the head of our armies, and had now returned with orders, or a request, whichever it might be called, from him.

The messengers had brought a letter to Captain Hyler, and after reading the written lines twice over our captain said as he handed the missive to my father :

“ It seems, lads, as if a portion of our force can be of service with the army. The general writes that he would be pleased if I could send him twenty or more stout lads who are accustomed to handling boats, and in case it so chances that he has no use for them, they are to be allowed to return without unnecessary delay. He praises your

activity, and hopes we may be able to send, from time to time, such information regarding the movements of the enemy in and around New York as will be of benefit to him."

Having thus spoken the captain paused as if he had nothing more to say, and we lads looked at each other in wonder and amazement.

Why good hands at managing a boat might be needed in the army we could not so much as guess, and we did know that the soldiers were being driven here and there at the pleasure of the British.

In fact, it seemed to me just then, as if the general himself would have done well to seek our quarters, and remain until he had men enough to meet the Britishers on something like equal terms ; but of course I knew that the thought was a foolish one, even as it formed itself in my mind.

Zenas was not content with such slight information as had been given, and asked curiously :

"Does the general propose that twenty or more of us shall try to reach him by traveling across country?"

"He appears to think we might go around by the way of the Delaware River to Philadelphia," Captain Hyler replied.

"And what work would we find there that

would be of more service to the Cause than such as is being done in this section ?”

“That is what I can’t say, lad. Even though he was willing we should know his plans, it is not reasonable to suppose he would write down in so many words what he counts on doing, for there were many chances our lads would have been captured when they came back. The question is, whether as large a number of you are willing to make the venture ?”

At this I managed to gather my wits quickly enough to say before any other could speak :

“We are ready for any venture, sir, which you require. It is not for us to say whether we will go here or there ; but to obey orders.”

“That was spoken right well, my lad ; but I’m not counting on ordering a single one of you on other service. All hands have joined this company for the purpose of carrying on the war after our own peculiar fashion, and should not be required to perform other duties. I would be glad, however, if as many as are needed would volunteer.”

In an instant more than thirty were standing, in token of a willingness to serve as the general might desire, and among that number were all of us Dunkels, much to my satisfaction.

“I reckon it will be a case of drawing lots,” the captain said with a hearty laugh. “Now that we have the volunteers, it only remains to decide how you will travel.”

“I propose that the Princess be provisioned for the voyage,” my father said as he folded the letter after having read it carefully. “She will carry as many as are needed, and I know her to be a good sea-boat.”

No one offered any objection to this proposition, therefore it appeared to be decided that those who complied with the general's request would set sail in what I considered a very comfortable fashion.

Then some one asked when the party would depart ; but this question Captain Hyler was not prepared to answer at once.

“We will think it over,” he said laughingly. “Master Dunkel and I must look into the matter a little more closely, and while that is being done I have laid out work enough to keep all hands from idleness. Cornwall, you and Smith are to set out at daybreak, and see to it that you get the lay of the land well in mind before coming back.”

I understood by this that Elijah had already received his orders concerning the scouting which

was to be done next day, and, with the hope that he would be successful in finding some profitable point of attack for us, I laid down in a spare bunk, heartily glad of an opportunity to stretch out my limbs after spending so many days in the boat and so many nights curled up in the bushes.

CHAPTER XV.

TREACHERY.

THE noises made by the early risers awakened me shortly after daybreak next morning, and then Elijah Cornwall and a companion were on the point of leaving the building, armed and equipped as if for any emergency.

My heart warmed toward the boy because of his apparent zeal in the work, and I said to myself that it was childish indeed for me to cherish ill-feelings toward him because of Simon Hunt's escape, since it was probably an accident which might have happened even if I had been on guard.

Thoughts of this kind came into my mind while I was making ready to run down on the shore where I could wash my face and hands in the water of the bay, and I then resolved to forget the mischief that might have come about through Elijah's carelessness, particularly since Simon was once more our captive.

Plenty of cold water on a frosty morning is calculated to put a fellow in the best condition,

both mentally and bodily, and when my simple toilet had been made I felt at peace with all mankind save Britishers and Tories.

Captain Hyler and my father were standing on the shore opposite where the Princess lay at anchor, talking earnestly, and I did not venture to draw near lest they have secrets which it would not be well for me to know.

I gazed around wondering what I should do to while away the time until breakfast was ready, and then it suddenly dawned upon me that our encampment was well worthy the attention of any person, not only because of its strength in case of an attack, but from a standpoint of real beauty.

The four buildings stood in the form of a Greek cross, with a cleared space in the middle where the lads amused themselves with games when there was nothing to be done in the way of work. The two larger huts were on a line with each other, situated parallel with the shore, and between them was a distance of perhaps thirty feet. The cook-house stood nearest the water, running back to form the cross, and thirty feet beyond was the prison.

This little settlement was surrounded on three sides by the forest, and in front spread the broad

expanse of the bay, on the waters of which, near the shore, lay our fleet of boats. Here, there and everywhere in the clearing were stout, vigorous lads engaged in work or sport, and lending such an air of life and excitement to the place as could not well be matched in any settlement.

As a winter-quarters for our whale-boat navy it was unsurpassed, and in event of an attack, which was hardly probable, we would be able to find shelter for all hands, from which last place the fleet could also be protected.

The only fault one might find with the encampment was that the forest had not been cleared away sufficiently, because the trees would give an enemy ample opportunities for concealment while making an attack. Had there been a full fifty yards of open space between the buildings and the thicket, it would have been more to my idea of what might be required to make it a perfect rendezvous for such as Captain Hyler's company.

Suddenly, while I stood there criticising, it struck me that I was proving myself a simple, for it mattered little to me whether the location was the best or the poorest to be found along the bay ; I had decided that I would be one of those sent in response to the general's request, and

it stood to reason that before we had finished such a task as he might have for us, the winter would be so far advanced that hostilities must cease during a certain time at least.

While I believed this serving in the whale-boat navy was exactly to my liking, I looked forward with no slight amount of interest to a certain time of service with the army, since it would give me, who had so lately counted myself a Tory, ample opportunity to see what others were doing by way of freeing the country from the rule of the king. Besides, I had a natural curiosity to see General Washington, the gentleman from Virginia who had taken such an enormous load on his shoulders when the reward for carrying it successfully would be comparatively slight, and the punishment for a failure must necessarily be exceedingly grievous.

All these things and many others which need not be set down here because they had nothing in common with the story I am trying to write, came into my mind as I stood looking about me idly, and then the call to breakfast aroused me to the fact that I was hungry.

When the morning meal had been eaten, and it was not a lengthy task because boiled potatoes, fried hasty pudding and salt pork are quickly

despatched, Captain Hyler called off the names of half a dozen who were given the duty of making the Princess ready for sea, under the direction of my father.

Neither Zenas, Moses nor myself were called upon, most likely because we had just come in from a hard and dangerous venture, and being passed by in such a fashion did not please me overly well. I was not a child who must be given so many hours in which to play because of having done a certain amount of work, and it would have been more to my liking had we Dunkels been set about the most arduous tasks.

However, it would have been silly to complain when the captain believed he was doing me a favor, and in company with my brothers and Reuben I lounged around the encampment trying hard to kill time in a pleasant manner.

By nightfall the Princess was ready for sea; all the stores were on board, and she could be gotten under way whenever Captain Hyler gave the word.

It only remained to wait until Elijah Cornwall and his comrade returned with their report.

These two were yet absent when we awakened next morning, and another day was spent in idleness.

Before the second night came many of us, Zenas and I among the number, believed that the party should be sent to Philadelphia without further delay.

After twenty should have left the encampment there yet remained lads enough to carry out any plan of harassing the Tories which Captain Hyler might devise, and if General Washington stood in need of services there ought to be no loitering simply because of what the future might present.

It can well be believed, however, that we did not make known to the captain that which was in our minds. Thus far I had seen in him only an exceedingly kind, good-natured man ; but I had an idea that at the first show of insubordination he would prove himself of quite a different make.

On this second evening, about two hours after sunset, Elijah returned alone, and looking scrutinizingly into his face to learn if he brought good news, I decided that his scout had been a failure.

The lad was not allowed to linger over the telling of his story. He had no more than shown his face inside the hut than a dozen voices were asking if he had found that for which he sought, and, to my great surprise, he replied by nodding his head in the affirmative.

“Where are we to strike?” some one shouted,

and Master Cornwall wisely replied that he would give the information when it should please the captain to hear him.

“Where is the lad Smith?” another cried.

“He stopped back yonder about two miles to visit an old friend; but he’ll be here before daylight to-morrow.”

None of the party appeared to think there was anything odd in Master Smith’s having found a friend; but I remembered that Captain Hyler told Zenas and myself that none of his company had ever been on Long Island, therefore did he welcome us because we could act as guides.

On second thought I called myself a fool for being suspicious; the friend of Smith’s might lately have moved down this way, or the lad could well have been acquainted on the island and Captain Hyler be ignorant of the fact.

“Go on with your story!” the captain cried cheerily. “I’m ready to hear it, and the others are eager to learn where can be found a chance to distinguish themselves.”

Surely Elijah appeared ill at ease as he stepped forward toward where the captain sat, and then gave us the following account of his work:

“We went back into the country on a straight line from here, about six miles, where is a small

settlement of farmers, all of whom are the rank-est kind of Tories. They have not been molested by either army, and it is possible to pick up such an amount of produce as will serve this company throughout the winter, to say nothing of the oxen and cows which they own. Whether any hard money is to be come at, I can't say ; but all the people look prosperous, and should have something laid by in the way of silver and gold."

"Are you certain there are no Whigs in the place?" Captain Hyler asked.

"If there are, the people lied to us. We talked with all the men, and it seems that nearly every family has sent one or more sons to join the king's army."

"We'll pay them a visit, leaving here early to-morrow morning, and if it so be you're not mistaken, those who are bound for Philadelphia can set out within six and thirty hours."

The captain appeared well pleased with the information brought by Elijah, as did nearly all the others ; but I was sorely perplexed. I could have sworn there was no such settlement as he described, anywhere on the island—surely no village of farmers, all of whom had sent sons into the king's army.

While turning this over in my mind I looked yet

more keenly at Master Cornwall, and decided that there was no question but the lad was feeling ill at ease. He had not told his story as I fancied he would if he really made such an important discovery ; but rather as one does who repeats something which has been learned instead of seen.

It was while these thoughts were in my mind that I observed Zenas gazing at me curiously, and in an instant I understood that he also was perplexed by the report.

“Are you acquainted with the location of this village, Master Dunkel?” the captain asked of my father.

“I never heard of it, to my knowledge ; but there must be many a village of which I am ignorant.”

Then the captain began questioning Elijah as to the road ; the number of able-bodied men in the settlement, and such matters as it would be necessary one should know who meditated an attack upon the place, and nearly all the company listened eagerly to the scout's replies.

Those who did not appear particularly interested were Zenas and myself. My brother had been moving restlessly to and fro until he stood near the door, and then, giving me a significant look, went out.

I understood that he wanted me to follow him, and this I did as soon as it was possible to leave the building without attracting attention. Where so many eager lads were gathered in one portion of the room, he who stood outside the throng might go or stay without the knowledge of the others.

After halting near the door an instant to make certain that Elijah above all others was not taking heed of my movements, I joined Zenas on the outside, and we walked in silence to the shore, past the sentinels until we were come to a point where it would have been impossible for an eavesdropper to have hidden himself.

Then my brother, wheeling squarely around to face me, asked in a whisper :

“Where is this place of which Elijah talks so glibly ?”

“I don’t know.”

“Did you ever hear of a settlement on this island where not one Whig dares show himself ?”

“Look here, Zenas,” I said impatiently. “There’s no use in beating about the bush. Neither you nor I believe what the scout has told.”

“True, and yet why should he lie ? This com-

pany will soon find out that it is untrue, and then what is to be done?"

Zenas' perplexity had the same basis as mine. It seemed necessary to find some motive for a falsehood, before you could charge him with having uttered one.

"Yes," I said slowly, talking to myself rather than to him, "the lad knows that Captain Hyler and the greater portion of his company will set out at once, depending upon the correctness of his information. Can it be that he wants them to leave the encampment?"

Zenas gripped my arm until I was nigh to crying out with pain, and looked me full in the face as he said :

"You are almost accusing him of being a traitor !"

"That cannot be, for I know nothing about the lad more than you do. The captain has confidence in him——"

"Have you?"

It was a question I dare not answer off-hand, and I compromised by saying :

"You know him as well as I. He did not dare attack the Princess in New York harbor, when any one with half an eye could have seen that she would fall into our hands like an over-ripe

apple. He sulked after we had done the work, until it would have attracted the captain's attention had he not finally put on a pleasant look. I have never yet been able to figure out how Simon Hunt and Micah Williams could have escaped from the hold of the Princess while he stood guard on deck, and since we arrived from Wallabout Bay, Reuben saw him in close converse with our prisoners."

This last was a bit of news for my brother, and he bade me tell him again what Reuben had said.

Then we both fell silent while one might have counted twenty, after which Zenas whispered :

"To my mind there is something wrong about that settlement of Tories within six miles of this place. I don't charge Elijah Cornwall with being a traitor ; but I count on having my eye on him from this out. We'll go back to the hut, for I want to have speech with father before all hands turn in."

When we reentered the building, my hands trembling as if I rather than another had betrayed signs of treachery, the captain had just come to an end of giving his orders concerning the next day's work.

"We'll leave here an hour before sunrise," he was saying in conclusion, "which will bring us

there in time for breakfast. It shouldn't be a long job to take possession of the settlement, and if they've oxen in plenty, we'll soon haul here what we conclude is worth bringing away."

All the details had evidently been decided upon, and there was nothing more for us to hear.

Elijah, professing to be weary because of a long tramp to learn if there were any other people living in the vicinity of this settlement, had lain down in his bunk, and a dozen or more were following his example, yet it was nearly an hour before we could get a private interview with father.

Then Zenas was forced to ask that he go with us to look after the Princess, because it was the only pretext we could use to get him away from the others.

Once outside where no one might hear us, we told of all that was in our minds regarding Elijah's loyalty, and my father said gravely, displaying no surprise whatsoever :

"It is not for you to accuse the lad of being a traitor until you have absolutely proven it. We four Dunkels are newcomers in this navy ; all the others have served under Captain Hyler before, and he should know them better than we do. To make such a grave charge, when you

have hardly had time in which to prove your own loyalty, might be to arouse suspicions as to our honesty. Remember, my sons, it is not many weeks since we were known as Tories, and despite all you have done, it is possible evil-minded men might accuse you of yet trying to work harm to the Cause."

"All you have said is true, father," Zenas replied; "but shall we hold our tongues when this Cornwall may be concerned in a plot against the captain?"

"There is nothing else to be done, since we, who have so lately shown that we can break our oaths, must not charge another with wrong-doing when it cannot be proven."

"By the time Elijah has proven himself a traitor, it may be too late for us to do any good."

"The captain counts on leaving behind those who are to go to Philadelphia, and we four Dunkels are to be of the party. It must be a strong force who can drive us out of this place."

"But suppose that Elijah's plan be to lead the captain and his followers into an ambush where they might be readily captured by the British? I was not reckoning that he simply had it in mind to capture the camp."

"If the Tories hereabout would drive us of the

whale-boat navy away, their best plan would be to destroy the buildings, stores and boats," father said thoughtfully, and he added an instant later, "It is possible that we might say something which would put the captain on his guard. Suppose Amos explains to Hyler that the lad has been seen talking confidentially with Simon Hunt?"

"That would be better than nothing," Zenas said, and I knew that he, like me, believed the proper course was to lay before the captain all we had observed and suspected, rather than take the chances of mischief being done.

"Very well," father said at length. "Amos shall speak to the captain in regard to what Reuben saw ; but it is not to be done until morning—just before the party sets out."

With this we lads were forced to be satisfied, for it was never in our minds to disobey any command given by father.

We went indoors one by one, lest we should attract too much attention if we entered together, and when I lay down in my bunk it was to toss from side to side during the whole night long, never for a single instant closing my eyes in sleep. I felt convinced Elijah Cornwall was working some Tory plot against us, although I could not have said exactly what, and the fear that he

might be successful was sufficient to drive all thought of rest from my mind.

As soon as the cooks turned out next morning I followed their example, and was pacing to and fro on the shore when Captain Hyler came down to wash his face and hands.

“Who is it?” he asked, not able to recognize me because it was yet dark.

“I ; Amos Dunkel, sir.”

“What brings you out so early, lad ? It was decided that you who were to sail in the Princess would be left behind this day to keep camp.”

“So I understood, sir ; but there is something in my mind of such import to me that I could not sleep, and I came here to have private speech with you.”

“Out with it, my lad. Speak freely, but quickly, unless you are willing others should hear, for I have turned out all the company.”

“It is only to say, sir,” I began stammeringly, not well knowing how to put into words the idea that Elijah might be a traitor, “we Dunkels who have lived all our lives on the island, have never heard of such a settlement as Cornwall described last night.”

Having said this much, I suddenly remembered that father had warned me against telling more

than what Reuben had seen, and before the captain could make reply, I blurted out that portion of the story.

“So !” he said reflectively, and then laughed in a very disagreeable manner. “One would think you were not overly well inclined toward Elijah Cornwall ?”

Now I spoke without taking due heed to my words, as I am prone to do, and said hurriedly :

“Father warned me against saying that which might sound like a charge against any one, and I have performed my task badly.”

“Then you lads have talked with your father, eh ? What is his idea ?” the captain asked eagerly.

I can't explain why it was ; but his tone invited my confidence, and without further parley I gave him in very few words the subject of the private conversation held between Zenas, father and myself the evening previous.

It was to me as if he remained silent a full half hour after I ceased speaking, although probably it was not more than sixty seconds. I was so fearful he might blame us for intimating anything against Elijah's loyalty that my nervousness caused the time to seem very long.

When he did speak, however, it was to the

point, and my heart grew lighter than it had been since my suspicions were aroused.

“If you Dunkels are on the alert and remain in camp, I have no fear matters will go wrong here. In case any mischief is afoot for those who follow Cornwall, I’ll answer for its not being serious. We’ll go to breakfast now.”

No one could have said there was anything unpleasant on the captain’s mind during the morning meal. He spoke as was his wont to each in turn, including Elijah, and when breakfast had come to an end, he summoned his company.

Half an hour later the last member of the party had left the encampment, and father said in a low tone to me :

“Now, lad, move quickly. We’ll bring a couple of swivels ashore, and plant them in front of the prison. See to it, while your brothers and I make ready the ammunition.”

CHAPTER XVI.

THE ATTACK.

ALTHOUGH it had never been reckoned upon as a probability that the encampment would be attacked, some little preparations for defense had been made.

It seemed almost certain that the Britishers would never come so far along shore, even if it was known Captain Hyler had established his headquarters at the head of the bay, because whale-boatmen were not big enough game for his majesty's troops to bother their heads about, and the Tories could hardly muster in sufficient force to openly attack our company. Therefore, as I have said, but little had been done by way of defense.

At the door of the barracks, inside, and also in the prison, a single swivel had been placed ; but there was among us so slight an idea we would ever be called upon to defend ourselves, that I question if we had on shore a single charge of grape for these guns.

Immediately Captain Hyler and his party had been swallowed up by the gloom, my father set about making preparations for defense, knowing full well that if an attack was to be made upon the encampment we might expect it nearabout daybreak.

Calling Reuben and half a dozen other lads to bear a hand, I set about getting the guns from the Princess, and while engaged in this work I had ample time in which to consider all the details of the situation.

Quite naturally I thought first of Elijah Cornwall, that lad who, in my heart, I charged with being a traitor.

Every pair of eyes had been upon him since he turned out of his bunk before daybreak, and yet I must confess that nothing had been seen to cause further suspicion.

But for the fact of his declaring there was a settlement where I knew full well none existed, I would have begun to fancy we lads had been mistaken when we believed there might have been anything wrong in his interview with Simon Hunt.

This much I said to Reuben as we were pulling off to the Princess, for the guns, and he replied by asking :

“Have you looked into the prison this morning?”

“No. Why do you ask such a question?”

“Because it has just come into my mind that something might be learned from the faces of our captives. If Elijah is setting any mischief afoot, you may be certain Simon Hunt shares the secret, and in such case he could not conceal it.”

There was sound common sense in such a suggestion, and when we came ashore with the swivels, I, leaving to my companion the lion's share of the labor, hurried on in advance to the log hut which served as jail.

Already suspicious, I took note of that which, under other circumstances would have failed of attracting my attention. It appeared to me that not only Simon, but all his fellow-prisoners started up excitedly when I suddenly threw open the outer door which gave entrance to a sort of hallway, divided from the main room by stout wooden bars.

Then, on seeing who was the visitor, they re-seated themselves as if disappointed.

I could not be mistaken, however, in reading the expression on Simon's face. The cur was struggling to keep his temper within bounds, and

even the worthy Captain Downes glared at me threateningly.

I had seen enough, and was about to turn away when Simon cried with what was more like a snarl of a cat, than the tone of a human voice :

“The Flushing turn-coat appears to have important business on hand this morning! Most likely he’s contriving how he can do his old neighbors a fresh injury.”

My temper never was slow in the arousing, and I could not resist the temptation of saying :

“I’m counting on making certain that my old neighbors don’t play me a dirty trick by means of a traitor !”

This shot struck home, and if ever I saw consternation on human faces, it was written on theirs.

From that moment no one could have persuaded me that Elijah Cornwall was an honest Whig.

I felt certain that whatsoever plot he had concocted was against the encampment, rather than those who had set out in search of the supposed settlement of Tories, and then I guessed at the whole scheme. The friends of Captain Downes, having learned that the British would not treat for his exchange, had induced Elijah Cornwall to lead our men on a wild goose chase in order that

they might have an opportunity to release the prisoners.

It was all as clear as day to me, and I would not have thanked any one for confirming my surmises.

Without loss of time I ran to my father, who was superintending the loading of muskets and distribution of ammunition, and told him that which was in my mind.

He smiled grimly when I was come to an end of the tale, and said in a tone which caused me to feel as if I was of very little importance :

“I am sorry, Amos, that it has taken you all these hours to work out the business. It seemed plain enough from the start, allowing you to be right in your suspicions of Cornwall.”

“But how could you have said to a certainty that it was Captain Downes’ friends who were engaged in the plot?” I asked with some slight show of ill temper.

“Because he is the only one of our prisoners who is of sufficient importance in the eyes of the Tories to warrant such a proceeding. The youngest child could guess that the loyal subjects of the king who live on this island would not hanker after a pitched battle with Captain Hyler’s force. See to it that your work is done quickly,

for I'm of the belief that our visitors will be here soon."

I had a very small opinion of myself after this interview with my father, and set about getting the swivels in place without another word to any one, greatly to the surprise of Reuben, who had counted on learning the result of my visit to the jail.

When we had completed our arrangements for the defense of the buildings, and all this was done before the sun had risen, my father called our company to him, and said :

"Lads, your captain has left me in command, and what I have set about doing most likely causes you some surprise. There is reason for believing that this camp will be attacked before an hour has passed, therefore have I insisted on certain preparations. You cannot blame me if I give to my sons the most dangerous posts. Zenas, with half a dozen stout lads, will charge himself with defending the jail, where, as I reckon, the hottest work may be found. Moses and two others are to be stationed in the cook's quarters. Amos, with three comrades, will go on board the Princess, and there fire at the enemy, if it so be any show themselves, whenever the swivels can be trained shoreward without danger of doing

injury to us. It is also possible that the Tories may approach in boats, in which case his will be a most important point, where, perhaps, all the work will be done. I count on having an eye out over the entire camp. There is no need for me to urge that you be on the alert ; you understand as well as I what would be the result to us if the enemy should be successful in this attack which I count to a certainty will be made. Now get to your posts, my boys, and keep your weather eyes lifting until I have been proven a fool, or the Tories are driven away."

As a matter of course I chose Reuben as one of the three to accompany me, and the other two were friends of his on whom he could rely implicitly.

It soothed me somewhat that father had given into my keeping an important post, and I was near to forgetting that I had shown myself as little better than a child in his eyes.

We four went on board the Princess without delay, and I was not such a booby as to plume myself upon being in command ; all of us worked together, without thought of giving or obeying orders, until we had two swivels at the bow, one on either side, and two aft.

The guns were loaded with heavy charges of

grape, and we had only to take careful aim in order to work havoc, providing, of course, that the enemy gave us the opportunity.

Reuben kept watch from the bow, and I astern, our companions moving about constantly, all keenly on the alert.

It was well my father had begun his preparations for defense immediately after Captain Hyler's party left the camp, otherwise we might have been caught napping, for in less than ten minutes after we finished loading the last gun, I heard the sound of oars in the distance, betokening, as I then believed, that we on the Princess would be called upon to bear the brunt of the attack.

In a whisper I told my companions of the discovery, and all save Reuben came aft.

Nearer and nearer sounded the swish of the oars, and I believed the strangers were working along the shore, otherwise we should have had them in sight some time before.

Just when I believed the approaching boats could no longer be hidden behind the screen of trees, a low cry from Reuben told that he had sighted an enemy, and we knew that the attack was to be made from the front and rear at the same moment.

Surely Captain Downes' friends were not to be despised as antagonists if they were in sufficient force to make up two parties.

There was nothing in sight from my end of the sloop when we heard my father cry :

“ Who comes there ? ”

So far as we could make out, there was no reply, and again came my father's voice :

“ Halt, or we shall open fire ! ”

At that instant a whale-boat came from behind the trees, having as crew ten well-armed men, and in her bow a small gun like unto the pieces on board the Princess.

“ Put back or I'll fire ! ” I cried, sighting one of the swivels as carefully as was possible in my excitement.

“ Give way heartily ! ” a man in the stern-sheets of the oncoming craft cried, and, taking this command as good proof of their hostile intentions, I applied the match which one of the lads held ready.

There was a deafening report ; the sloop reeled under the recoil of the swivel, and I believed we had blown the entire boat-load into eternity.

A few seconds later, however, when the smoke cleared away, I saw to my chagrin that I had shot wide of the mark.

The boat was coming on with the spray dashing up like a bunch of silver threads from her bow, and dangerously near.

“Set about loading the swivel, lads!” I cried, bringing the other piece to bear, and in ten seconds more it was discharged.

This time my aim was more true; but yet not what it should have been.

The bow of the boat was shattered, dismounting the gun, and the crew were in the water.

By this time Reuben understood that he was needed aft, and he came with a shout as the enemy advanced.

They had taken the precaution to advance in shallow water, where it would be possible to wade ashore in case the boat was swamped, and the craft had no more than sunk when they were coming at full speed, with muskets held high in the air to prevent them from getting wet.

It was no longer good policy to depend upon the swivels, for the Tories had separated like unto the sticks of a fan, and Reuben cried as he drew our muskets from the companionway:

“We must trust to these now, lads! Be careful of your aim, for we can’t afford to lose a single bullet!”

On the shore I could hear the rattle of fire-

arms, which told that we must depend upon ourselves, because the remainder of our company probably had as much work on hand as could be attended to. I did not dare turn my head in that direction, however, for the occupants of the boat were coming dangerously near.

It was Reuben who fired first, and there was a certain grim satisfaction in my heart when I saw one of the Tories drop his gun to clasp his hands over a wound just above the knee.

Then the rest of us fired, and I knew that the shots were returned, because I could hear the bullets singing everywhere around my head ; but by this time the odor of burning powder had mounted to my brain until I was like to one who has suddenly lost his senses.

Concerning this part of the battle I can say but little of my own knowledge. I could dimly see the enemy, who had retreated to a clump of bushes near by, and fired again and again until the barrel of my musket was so hot that I could hardly hold it in my hands ; I knew from the cry of pain and the bright red drops on the white planks, that one of our party had been wounded or killed ; but at the moment it seemed to be no real concern of mine.

Now and then I could hear, as if from afar

off, the crack of firearms and shouts of anger or pain ; but it was all like some horrible, confused dream until Reuben shouted again and again :

“ We’ve beaten them off ! we’ve beaten them off, and left our marks on more than one ! ”

Then it was I regained my scattered senses, and understood that the enemy had disappeared.

There was nothing to show we had fought a real battle, striving to kill and in danger of being killed, save the shattered whale-boat whose gunwales were sticking a few inches above the surface, and the blood on our deck.

“ Who was hurt ? ” I cried, looking around like one in a dream.

“ Tom Johnson got a bullet in the arm, and is below nursing it ; I reckon he isn’t in any very bad way,” Reuben replied, whereupon I, like a simple, for it showed that I had had but little knowledge of my own movements, asked :

“ When did the Tories run ? ”

“ After you pinked the fellow whom I allowed was the leader. He got it rough in the shoulder, and that settled the others,” Reuben said with a laugh, and then it came over me like a flash causing much mental pain, that I had been shooting, perhaps, at my own townsmen, with intent to kill.

“Let’s get forward !” one of my comrades cried. “Those ashore are not winding the business up as quickly as we did, and it’s time we lent a hand !”

We acted upon this suggestion without loss of time, and when I stood near the swivel on the starboard side, it was possible to see three or four strangers half concealed by the foliage, evidently watching some one near about the main building.

Quite naturally it was impossible for me to get a glimpse of our own people. From the location of the buildings, I knew that those guarding the prison must necessarily be hidden from view, while the others would be inside one hut or the other.

Just at that instant, however, it was not necessary I should see my friends ; it was enough that they were holding their own, and that we on the Princess had a target.

Without delay I sighted the swivel on the starboard side, while Reuben devoted his attention to the piece outside, and when both of us were satisfied with the aim, the guns were discharged.

It was impossible to ascertain what had been the effect of our shots ; but that they had been fired in proper time we understood by the cheers which came from the vicinity of the prison.

“Reload them lively !” I cried excitedly. “There appears to be a chance for us to do some good work if we make no delay !”

The words had hardly been spoken, when, while I was leaning over to seize the sponger, a bullet whistled over my head. Had I been standing erect it would have plowed its way directly through my body.

But it was not the narrow escape from death which caused me the most intense alarm. The fact that the missile had come from seaward told that we had not wholly beaten our enemies in that direction, or else a fresh party had come up, and I ran aft at full speed, followed by all my companions.

As we neared the tiller we were greeted by a volley from the bushes to the left, where the crew of the boat had last been seen, and I breathed more freely, even though there was considerable danger from this unseen foe, because I believed no new assailant had appeared on the scene.

“We can beat them back again with a few loads of grape !” I cried, swinging one of the guns around in order to reload it; and then it was that Reuben cried, as he pointed seaward :

“We are like to need more than a few charges.

All the Tories on Long Island must have made an agreement to be here this day !”

I looked in the direction pointed out, and to my dismay saw two boats being pulled toward the shore at a high rate of speed by four oars in each craft. Reinforcements were arriving for the enemy, and we had made our most vigorous defense already ; the remainder of our work must necessarily be feeble.

The continued discharge of fire-arms in the rear told that our party on shore had all the work which could well be attended to, and I understood that we, who had already been weakened by having one man disabled, could not hope to beat back these fresh enemies while those who were concealed in the bushes were where they could pick us off at their leisure.

“ We cannot hold out against both parties, and it will be wiser to beat a retreat while we can make certain of gaining the huts,” one of our company said, and Reuben replied hotly :

“ We must hold this sloop under all circumstances, for once the enemy gets possession of her, the swivels will be turned against the buildings. One of us ought to go on shore and warn Master Dunkel that we have nearly come to the

end of our rope. He must send us assistance, or decide to let the Tories win the day ! ”

It was on the tip of my tongue to insist that he should go without delay because he could best explain the situation, when an exclamation of mingled surprise and joy burst from his lips.

Glancing seaward, in the direction where he was looking, I saw that the occupants of the oncoming boats were firing at those of our enemies who were concealed in the thicket, and by the time I succeeded in realizing the pleasing fact that these last arrivals were friends, I recognized them as the crews which had been sent to Wallabout Bay at the same time we set off to make a try at releasing American prisoners.

It was evident that the Britishers had not succeeded in capturing them, and what was more to the point so far as we were concerned, they had arrived just in the nick of time.

There was no longer any reason why we need give our attention to the Tories in the bushes while we were needed forward, and, waving our hands in welcome to our friends, we turned to aid those of our company who appeared to be sorely pressed.

“Smoke those fellows out ! ” Reuben cried, as

he pointed in the direction where the last bullets had come from, and the reply came in the form of a ringing cheer.

“Now that it’s safe to leave the sloop’s stern undefended, we’ll bring those two swivels forward. With one to take aim and discharge the pieces while the others reload, we should be able to pour a heavy fire into the ranks of Captain Downes’ friends,” I shouted, and in a twinkling my companions were carrying into effect that which I had meant as a suggestion rather than an order.

Within less than five minutes after we learned that our comrades had escaped from Wallabout Bay, and were in a position to aid us, we on board the Princess were throwing a regular shower of grape into the foliage on either side the group of buildings.

Perhaps each of the four pieces had been discharged three times when we heard the rattle of musketry far in the distance, and then it was that my father showed himself from around the corner of the hut, as he shouted :

“Cease firing ! The Tories are retreating, and Captain Hyler’s force is coming up !”

An instant later, and while we stood gazing shoreward with the most intense relief because

the battle was over and the victory ours, the lads who had arrived so opportunely came over the rail.

“Have you driven those fellows out?” Reuben asked, and the foremost replied :

“They’ve taken to their heels through the underbrush, and I reckon you won’t see hide nor hair of ’em again. Say, did you get away with the prisoners the other night?”

“We brought five off, and the sixth was most likely killed just as he was leaving the ship. Where were you when the firing began?”

“Under the bushes ashore, keeping out of the rain.”

“Did you stay there?”

“We weren’t quite such fools as that. Whether you were captured or went free, we had good reason to believe that the shores of the bay would be overhauled pretty thoroughly next morning, and turned out mighty quick. Were any of you fellows hurt?”

“We didn’t get so much as a scratch. Tell us how you got away.”

“It was a tight squeeze ; but we managed it by going directly into New York city. The night was pitchy dark, as most likely you know, and there wasn’t many a chance we’d be sighted by a

guard-boat, unless by pulling plump into it. We could see you fellows by the glare of the cannon, as of course the Britishers could, and when the hubbub was at its height, we started for the city. Say, there we read notices of a missing boy, in which it was stated that he was last seen in company with a lad from Flushing by name of Simon Hunt. Do you know anything about him?"

Reuben burst into a regular spasm of laughing, while I replied gaily :

"Aye, we've got him here," and then I told in fewest words possible the story of our adventures at the inn and the dock, concluding by asking, "How long were you in the city?"

"Three days."

"Where did you sleep?"

"In one end of the rope-walk on the Hudson River. We rowed entirely around the city before venturing to land, on that night of leaving Wallabout Bay."

"Did you get into any trouble?"

"Nothing to speak of. Once or twice we were hauled up by the watch, and put through a course of questioning, but we managed to come out all right finally, though I don't care to have many such narrow squeaks. What was the cause of the row here?"

It required several minutes in which to give our newly arrived friends a clear idea of what had occurred, and before I came to an end of the story we saw Captain Hyler and his party approaching the huts.

Then we got our wounded comrade out of the sloop's cabin, and learned to our dismay that his injuries were quite serious. He had succeeded only in partially staunching the flow of blood, and, determined that we should not be hindered in the fight by his appeal for help, had come near bleeding to death.

He was as pale as a ghost when we got to him, and my heart smote me for having been such a brute as to leave him unattended while we gossiped with those lately come from New York.

It can be imagined that we carried him on shore with the least possible delay, and once there I saw how sadly we were in need of a surgeon.

Six lads were wounded, some quite badly, and my father and Captain Hyler were dressing the wounds to the best of their ability.

"You were fortunate with your part of the scrimmage, Amos," my father said grimly when I came up with the disabled lad. "At one time

I feared you would be forced to knock under, and yet it was impossible to send reinforcements."

"We got them from Wallabout Bay," I replied with a chuckle, and his look of mystification was indeed comical.

CHAPTER XVII.

BAD NEWS.

THE story which those who went out with Captain Hyler had to tell, was little different from what I expected to hear.

Elijah Cornwall had led them through the woods for half an hour or more, and when the reports of our swivels could be heard, he suddenly disappeared.

The captain, who had suspected that he would try to give them the slip, ordered half a dozen lads to follow ; but, strange to say, the renegade succeeded in throwing them off the scent.

Most likely he was acquainted with that bit of the woods, having examined it the day previous, and knew full well that the tangle of bushes would give one who knew the landmarks ample opportunity for escape.

At all events he disappeared completely, and there was no longer a question in the minds of our company but that he had turned Tory for the sake of the reward which had probably been offered by Captain Downes' friends.

He richly deserved to be hanged, and I had no doubt but that he would have been had our lads got their hands upon him.

Now he would, if he was wise, keep hidden from all who ever knew him, and perhaps such a necessity would in time come to be a worse punishment than death.

Captain Hyler's party had retraced their steps at once, and arrived when they were most needed, because, as I came to know later, matters on shore were looking very dark for our people while they had so many wounded on their hands.

It was fortunate for the company that we Dunkels were suspicious people, and Captain Hyler gave proof that he realized this fully, when he said to me in the presence of every one :

“I have again to thank you and your family, Amos. I had come near to falling into the trap, because of never dreaming so many Tories might be mustered in the vicinity. I hope most sincerely some day it may be possible for me to show you Dunkels that I fully appreciate your services.”

The captain was not a man to indulge overmuch in sentiment, and having said this to me he turned his attention to the work of the future, since the wounded no longer needed attention, by

proposing to my father that the Princess be gotten under way at once.

“You shall ship others in the stead of those who are disabled,” he said, “and put to sea within the hour. There is no need for me to map out the course. Use your own judgment, and if there is a man in this colony who can make his way to General Washington, you are the one.”

It was rather sudden to us who had so lately been struggling desperately for life ; but at such times one soon accustoms himself to startling changes, and my father at once began selecting such as would sail with him in the stead of those poor fellows who must spend many a long, weary day nursing their wounds.

At my whispered suggestion he chose six of those who had so lately come from New York, and in less than two hours the Princess was under full sail, heading out of Smithtown Bay on a cruise around Long Island to the capes of the Delaware and beyond.

Almost before we were under way the lads from Wallabout Bay insisted on learning all we could tell regarding our work of aiding the prisoners to escape, and Reuben and I went over again all the details, until it came into my mind that perhaps we lads had been braver than we

realized, for indeed it was a noble deed to rescue five poor wretches from the custody of such brutes as held them.

The voyage before us was a long one under the best of circumstances, and, owing to baffling winds, we took more time for it than usual.

We were five days making Montauk Point, and as many more elapsed before we were behind Cape May on our way up the river.

It was simply a case of sailing a small craft, with no danger save such as may be expected by those who trust themselves to the sea. We never even saw a redcoat, or anything that resembled the British flag, during all that time, and when we came to the city of Philadelphia it was with the belief that General Washington was rapidly getting the worst of the enemy.

Before either of us had time to go on shore in order to procure such provisions as were needed, we learned of all that had happened to dishearten the friends of the Cause, and it was in my mind we had best flee the country in order to escape the halter which the king's officers and the Tories were preparing for us.

It was on the 19th day of December in the year 1777 (at that time I no longer had the heart to call it the year of Independence). General

Washington had left Newark to fall back on New Brunswick before Lord Cornwallis ; then he had continued his retreat to Princeton, hotly pursued by the Britishers, his men, their time of service having expired, had left him by scores until he had in his entire army no more than three thousand. On the 8th of December he had crossed the Delaware in his flight, for by this time his movements could hardly be dignified with the name of "retreat."

On the 13th General Charles Lee had been taken prisoner by, the enemy ; but my father, who believed that officer to be a drag upon us rather than a help, said it was the first bit of good fortune the gentleman from Virginia had had since he was forced to evacuate New York, and so it afterward proved.

The people of Philadelphia were leaving the city as fast as they were able to procure means of transportation, believing the redcoats would soon arrive there, and General Putnam, who was in command at that city, could say nothing to allay their fears.

General Howe had taken possession of Newport, intending it as a station for British ships entering the Sound. Lord Cornwallis had packed his trunks ready to go home to England, for he be-

lieved the "rebellion" had been crushed, and it was said they were already on board ship that he might sail immediately after the Christmas festivities in New York had come to an end.

We were told that we would find the commander-in-chief on the shores of the Delaware somewhere in the vicinity of Trenton, and also advised that if we had any care for our skins it was well to turn back while there was time for escape.

Surely matters seemed dark indeed, and I believe of a verity that if my father had asked whether we thought it best to beat a retreat, I should have urged that we put the Princess about at once.

Fortunately for all concerned, however, such an idea never entered his mind. He had left Smithtown Bay with the purpose of presenting himself and his following to General Washington, and that he would do if it was within the power of man.

Zenas believed we should get word to General Putnam that we were arrived, and for what purpose; but Moses insisted it would be unwise to meddle with army officers more than was absolutely necessary, lest we find ourselves ordered here and there according to the whim of a general

who was more interested in himself than in what the commander-in-chief might desire.

As for Reuben and I, we had no very decided idea one way or the other, therefore did not interfere in the discussion that was held in the cuddy of the Princess immediately after we heard the bad news which the loungers of Philadelphia had to impart.

There was one thing certain, which was that we had come to an end of our voyage in the sloop.

The river was not frozen over; but there was so much floating ice that navigation was difficult, and, in fact, we had been near being cut down by the huge cakes more than once since we passed Penn's Cove.

Wherever the small remnant of an army was, there we must go on foot, and in view of the fact that none of us were acquainted in this section of the country it surely seemed as if it would be necessary to apply to some officer or citizen for instructions as to how we should proceed.

Then, as if to put an end to a fruitless discussion, my father went on shore to purchase supplies, and when he returned we gained additional information, while at the same time it was made plain that we would follow our leader instead of mapping out a course for him to follow.

“General Washington is encamped on the Pennsylvania side of the Delaware near the falls of Trenton, and has been joined by Generals Sullivan and Gates, which gives him a force of near seven thousand men, instead of only three as we have been told,” my father said as he gave the stores to the lad who was acting as cook. “The British are in large force, and I’m of the opinion that we’re to be set about handling transports in which the army will be taken to some less dangerous point. We can make our way up the river on foot, providing we have with us a small boat to be used when we are forced to cross creeks or small streams, and it is my purpose to set out at daybreak to-morrow. One of you lads will be left behind to keep ship, and you may draw lots to decide who this shall be.”

“Are you not going to report to General Putnam?” Zenas asked.

“We were not so instructed by Captain Hyler, and I don’t propose to take any chances of being delayed.”

“Might it not be possible to find some one here in the city who would act as guide?” Moses asked, and father replied grimly :

“By following the river we can’t go astray, and it is not needed that we have a native to tell

us which way the current is running. The fact of the matter is, lads, that I am the head of this party, so you may as well draw lots to learn who is to be shipkeeper, and put an end to your haggling."

It would be no slight task to tramp all the way to Trenton, forced to take a small boat here and there when we needed ferriage, and suffering from the cold as we must, yet there was a great fear in my heart lest I should be the one selected by lot to remain behind. Anything seemed preferable to staying safely on board the Princess when the others were winning names for themselves.

It was Reuben who took charge of the lot drawing. He took from our store of provisions a lot of white beans corresponding to the number of our party, and one of these he replaced by a black bean, afterward throwing them all into his cap.

"Each in turn shall draw a bean," he said, giving the cap a vigorous shake, "and he who gets the black fellow will stay snugly on board the Princess while the rest of us tramp through Pennsylvania snow, or wade along the Delaware."

"If you think it might be a pleasant job to stay behind, why not volunteer for the service?" one

of the company asked, whereupon Reuben replied with a laugh :

“ While I may think it a soft task, I’m counting on having a look at Trenton, where the Britishers are loafing until they can get at our general ; unless,” he added with a grimace, “ it so chances that I pull out the black fellow.”

I was too impatient to wait very long before learning my fate, therefore pressed forward and took the first chance.

To my great joy I held a white bean. Reuben came next, and with the same good fortune.

Father, Zenas and Moses were equally lucky, and not until nearly all the beans had been taken from the cap did the black one show itself.

It was a lad from New Brunswick who held it, and a very wry face he pulled, on thus being selected as the idler.

During the day father bought a stout skiff for nine hard dollars, with the understanding that seven of them should be refunded if he returned the boat in good condition within the coming month.

Into this craft we packed a sufficient amount of stores to provide us with food during a full week, and half an hour after sunset we were

stowed away in order to get a long night's sleep to put us in condition for the next day's work.

It was agreed that the shipkeeper should remain on watch, and at midnight cook a hearty breakfast. He would awaken us as soon after three o'clock as the meal was ready, and then we might count on being past the city before the day broke.

As we planned so we did. We were well on our way by daylight, having passed the town without being interfered with by the watchmen who should have been on the lookout, and no one in Pennsylvania, save the lad we had left aboard the Princess, was any the wiser as to our destination.

Of this long tramp, which was beset by many difficulties and much hardship, I do not propose to write at any length.

The river was filled with floating ice which oftentimes rendered the labor of working the skiff much greater than was that of clambering over ice cakes on the shore, or through drifts of snow ; but it was necessary we keep her with us unless we were minded to take to the highway, which last was not to our liking, owing to the fact that at any time we might be halted by the soldiers.

The journey came to an end none too soon to

please me, for it seemed, when we were finally brought to a standstill by the outposts of General Washington's army, as if I could not walk another mile, and glad indeed was I of the opportunity afforded us for rest, while word was being sent to the officer of the day that a party of rough-looking lads claimed to have been summoned by the commander-in-chief.

When the officer arrived, after a delay of nearly an hour, he would have it that we must explain to him who we were, where we had come from, and, in fact, all the particulars concerning ourselves, even down to the date of our certificates of baptism, as Reuben laughingly declared, but my father was one who could hold himself as high and mighty as any man who sported gold lace and shoulder-straps.

"General Washington sent a messenger to Captain Adam Hyler, asking that he come to him at this point, and there is no more information which I am at liberty to give you," he said, speaking the officer fairly, yet with a certain degree of curtness. "If you will inform the general that we have arrived, I'll answer for it that we're not kept waiting outside the lines very much longer."

At first it appeared as if this officer, who seemed to have a very good opinion of himself, would

refuse to forward the word to headquarters. He turned away stiffly, without a word; but later must have decided that it might not be safe to keep the fact of our arrival from the general, for after we had waited two hours or more an orderly came to escort us to the commander's quarters.

We traveled a good three miles through the snow before arriving at a small house near the bank of the river, and then I knew we were come at last to our journey's end, because of the guard which paced to and fro in the front and rear of the building.

We had hardly reached the door before it was opened, and a tall, stern-visaged man, with a military cloak hanging carelessly from his shoulders, stepped outside and looked at us scrutinizingly.

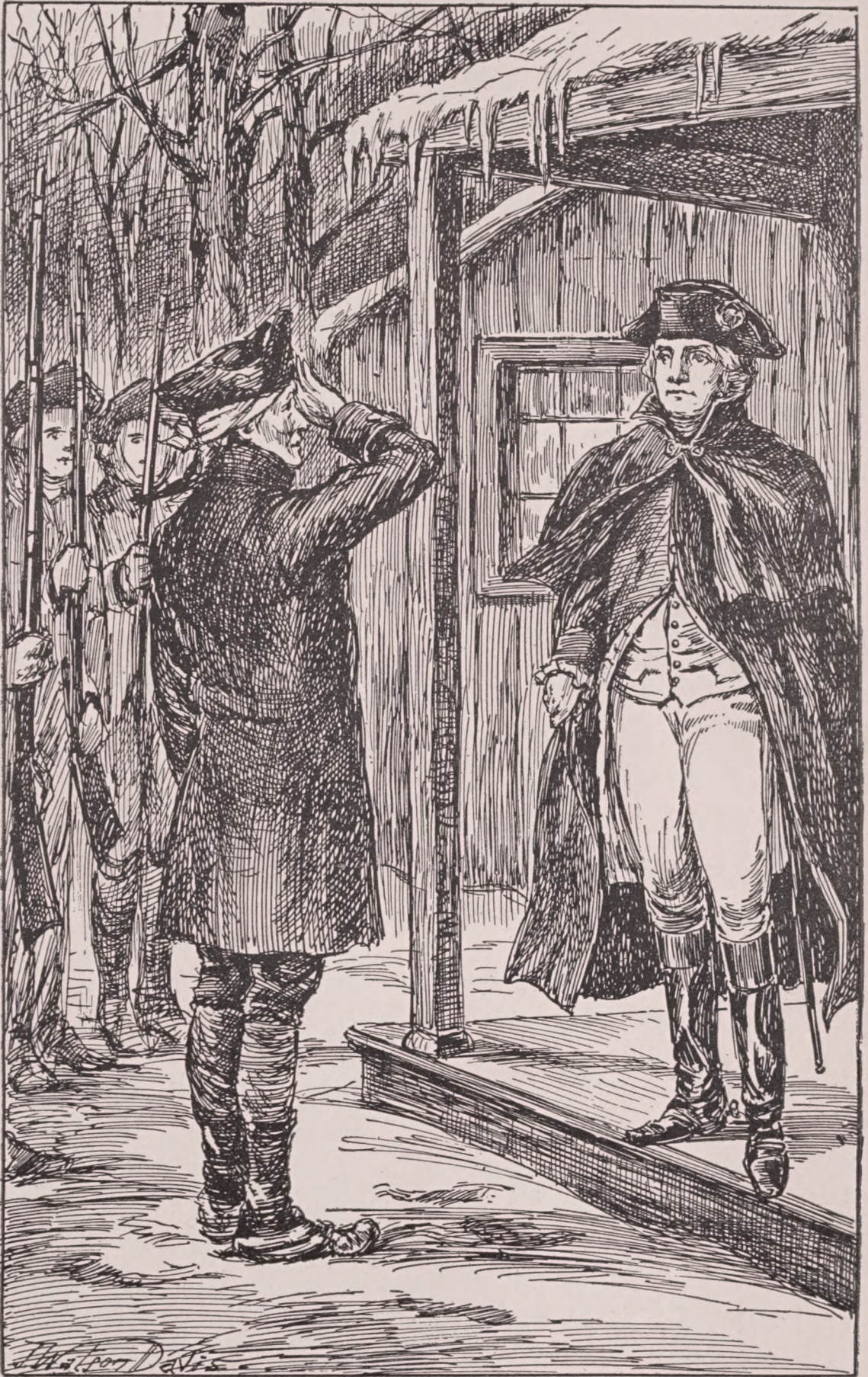
"Who is in command of this party?" the general asked, for it was the gentleman from Virginia himself.

Father stepped forward and saluted as if he had been born and bred a soldier.

"And you come from Captain Adam Hyler?"

"Here is a letter from him, sir," and father handed the general the missive we had brought all the way from Smithtown Bay.

"You may come in, sir, and I will send some one to show your troops to quarters."



Watson Davis

“Who is in command of this party?” the general asked. Father stepped forward and saluted.—Page 336.

Amos Dunkel.

Then my father followed the general, and we were left standing outside until a sergeant, who by great good luck proved to be a Flushing man, came up with the word that we were to follow him.

We were not long in finding out that he was born on Long Island, and when we told him who we were and where we had come from, he was eager to do everything possible for our comfort.

A wood-shed an hundred yards or more from the house was the only shelter which could be given us, the sergeant explained in an apologetic tone, and I thought of the shipkeeper snug in the Princess' cabin ; but without for a moment wishing I might be able to change places with him.

We had been forced to leave the skiff, and, consequently, all our provisions, near where we were halted by the outpost, and the sergeant promised to send a squad of men after the stores as soon as he could get the necessary permission.

First, however, he was eager to learn all we were able to tell him concerning Flushing and its citizens, and his satisfaction was great when we described to him the capture of Captain Downes, as well as the refusal of the British to treat for his exchange.

As a matter of course we told him of Simon Hunt's career, and had begun an account of our attempt to liberate Americans from the prison-ships when father interrupted the story.

His interview with the general was come to an end, and I understood by the expression on his face that we had not been summoned idly.

It so happened that he was well acquainted with the sergeant, and seemed to consider it necessary to hold him long in conversation, much to the displeasure of us all, for we were burning with the desire to hear what was required of us.

Finally, when it seemed as if he had loitered until the night was near at hand, our Flushing sergeant concluded to hunt up a squad of soldiers which he could send for our belongings, and immediately he had left the shed I asked impatiently :

“Did the general tell you why he wanted us, sir?”

“Yes, lad, and I'm at liberty to give you an inkling of the task, but it is with the understanding that you are to keep it a profound secret, never so much as speaking of it where others may hear. It seems that we're to join forces with some men from Massachusetts, and on a certain night undertake to ferry the army across the river to the New Jersey side.”

“Cross this river in boats laden with men?” Zenas asked in astonishment.

“Aye, lad.”

“It can’t be done!” my brother said decidedly. “It would be a hard job to get an unloaded boat across while the river is so choked with ice, and the current so swift.”

“If that is really your opinion, it would have been better that you drew the black bean,” my father said sternly. “General Washington has said the work must be done, and it is not for us to set our belief against his wishes.”

“A whale-boat would be crushed into kindlings before she had been forced fifty feet from the shore,” Zenas said doggedly, and to my great relief the Flushing sergeant interrupted the conversation, for had it continued one minute longer hard words might have been spoken.

CHAPTER XVIII.

ONE NIGHT'S WORK.

WHEN my father first spoke of the work which the commander-in-chief had laid out for us, it was in my mind, and Zenas and Moses shared the same belief, that we from Long Island were to have charge of the whole business—that upon our shoulders was to be laid the burden of transporting seven thousand men across a river which was lined from bank to bank with swiftly-moving ice, and that the task must be performed in one night.

It was such a false impression that we began to discuss the matter after our Flushing sergeant had left the shed, and then it was that father quickly gave us to understand we were of no such importance in the eyes of the general.

“You are simply to do, each and every one, a man's work with your hands, and no more. Some officer from Massachusetts colony—one General Glover, if I understand the name aright—is to command the force detailed to work the boats, and he has declared that the task can be accom-

plished within the time set by General Washington, providing he has a sufficient force of expert boatmen," my father said with just a show of irritation because we gave proof of being thick-headed, when a child ought to have understood the situation thoroughly well. "Will it please you to say to these men from Massachusetts that what they are ready to set about is impossible for us of Long Island? Shall I tell the general that you are afraid to attempt what others have allowed will be a simple task for men who are accustomed to handling boats?"

Such a proposition angered us, as indeed my father believed it would, and Zenas was on his feet in a twinkling, the remainder of our party well satisfied that he should act the part of spokesman.

"We are not afraid to attempt anything in the line of a sailor's or a landsman's duty, and have never intended you should so understand us, sir. We are ready to set our hands to anything, and will accomplish it if it be possible for mortal man. If these wonderful sailormen from Massachusetts, however, tell you that it is no more than a simple task to put a boat loaded with men across the Delaware River while it is like a mill-race, and crowded with ice anywhere from ten inches to

two feet thick, then you know as well as do the rest of us, that there is a falsehood somewhere. All hands of us have had some experience with the ice since we left Philadelphia, and can guess what it might be to cross the river ; but you mistake us, father, if you believe we would refuse to make any effort, however impossible of accomplishment it might seem, when General Washington orders us forward."

"Do you still hold to it that the task cannot be performed ?" my father asked mildly.

"I claim that the foremost boat would be crushed by the ice before she could be forced half-way across ; but, perhaps, the second, or the third would live to reach the opposite bank. It is much like a lottery, sir."

"If a boat was crushed by the ice, particularly in the night-time, when one would not be able to see clearly, her crew would stand a good chance of being drowned," father said half to himself, and Zenas replied, still acting as spokesman for all the party :

"Aye, sir, that is true, and yet you know full well that there is not a lad here who will hang back once the word to make the venture is given."

"You are right, my boy ; I *do* know that much, and have but been trying your nerve. I grant

you this job is dangerous ; yet there is no question in my mind but that every one of you will tackle it bravely, and if death comes to one or all, it will be while we are doing valiant battle to accomplish the purpose. Here is as much as I understand of the enterprise : Very shortly, I do not know exactly when, our army will make the attempt to cross the river during the night. One division, under General Cadwallader, will set out from nearabout Bristol ; a second, in command of General Ewing, is to start from this point, while the main army, numbering between two and three thousand men, will embark at a place known as McKonkey's, nine miles above here, and is to be led by Washington himself, under whom will serve Generals Sullivan and Greene. We are to put in our work with this last force, and it is proposed that we set out early to-morrow morning for the rendezvous, in order to assist at overhauling the boats in case any repairs are needed."

Such a statement as my father had just made satisfied our company thoroughly. There was not a lad among us who even thought of shirking the danger, but it was only natural we should speculate upon the chances of accomplishing the work.

Of a verity it was a hazardous venture, and I for one did not believe it within the power of man, yet there was never the slightest desire in my heart to beat a retreat. On the contrary, I was well pleased that we of Long Island would have an opportunity of showing men from Massachusetts that we could handle a boat as well, if not better, than they.

During the remainder of the day and evening we spoke of little else save how the task might best be performed under this or that condition of tide and wind, and many useful hints did we gather from the discussion.

Our Flushing sergeant saw to it that our skiff was dragged upstream to a small cove near by where we then were, and he also took it upon himself to provide us with such articles of comfort or necessity as could be come at in an army where nearly every one, from the commander-in-chief to the private, was lacking in this or that essential portion of a soldier's outfit.

The most difficult part of telling such a tale as this is the necessity of hurrying over incidents which at the time seemed of great importance, but to a stranger unacquainted with the situation, would sound like a multiplication of useless words.

It would please me right well to describe what we saw and repeat all we heard, during such brief time as we remained with this half-clad, half-starved army on the banks of the Delaware ; but it would require in the telling more pages than I have time to fill.

Therefore it is I must content myself with saying that early in the morning after our arrival at General Washington's headquarters, we set out for the point known as McKonkey's, and once there found ample work to keep us from dwelling upon the peril which the future had in store for us.

The men from Massachusetts were by no means puffed up with pride as I had fancied. They were right good comrades, ready for a jest or a pleasant word as the occasion might require, and never shirking their full complement of work.

We found along the river bank a vast number of craft ; some of them as staunch whale-boats as could be seen in Captain Hyler's fleet ; others no more than light shallops which would not have stood up a single moment against the ice-cakes when two or more crashed together.

It was said that all the boats from both sides of the river had been collected, either here or at the other points where our army was to embark,

and that by such means had the Britishers been prevented from crossing the river in pursuit when General Washington retreated into Pennsylvania in but poor condition to risk a battle.

It can well be supposed that among so many boats, and in view of the rough usage to which they were subjected, there was much labor in the nature of repairs to be performed.

From the instant we reported to General John Glover, who was in charge of this difficult transportation, until the time arrived for beginning the task, hardly an idle moment was spent.

If we could have got at a store of lumber such as was needed, much might have been done toward putting the small craft into proper shape for the work required of them ; but we had very little with which to make repairs, and on that Christmas afternoon in the year of Independence, when we were ordered to be ready for our work as ferrymen, I looked with dismay and apprehension at the frail craft in which the flower of the Patriot Army was to be embarked.

Some of our lads had fancied that we would make some note of Christmas day, if in no other way than to spend it idly ; but early on that morning my father made known to us who had come from Captain Hyler's fleet, that the gigantic

undertaking would be begun in the evening, and there were so many necessary things yet to be done that we hardly stopped long enough to eat our scanty rations.

It can well be supposed that we watched carefully the weather, and when, late in the afternoon, the wind set in from the north-east, bringing with it a blinding storm of snow and sleet, I said despairingly to Zenas :

“I had thought that the passage would be impossible on a reasonably calm day, when we would have no more to contend with than the current and the ice ; but now, with a whole gale raging, how can the task be performed ?”

“General Washington won't think of trying to go over in such a storm,” Reuben said confidently, “I'm told the army will be forced to march nine miles, after gaining the other side, in order to come upon the Britishers at Trenton, and it isn't likely he'd count on making such a journey as that, even though he was at this moment on the opposite bank.”

In this both Zenas and I agreed with Reuben ; but we soon came to know that more than a snow-storm and a raging torrent was needed to prevent our commander-in-chief from carrying out his plans.

An hour before sunset a mounted officer came into our camp, which might better have been called a ship-yard, and a few moments later it was noised around among us anxious ones that General Washington had sent General Glover word regarding the beginning of his march.

The troops were actually coming, in all that storm, to attempt a passage which, even when one cast aside every thought of danger, was frightful in the extreme.

The heavy blasts had broken the ice further up the river, and huge masses were swirling, pitching and rolling on the swift current, now crashing into each other with a grinding roar that could be heard even above the howling of the wind, and again surging against the banks until tons upon tons were forced high on the shore.

What with the wind and the indescribable tumult caused by the swiftly-moving ice, it was difficult for a fellow to make himself heard by his nearest neighbor, save when he shouted at the full strength of his lungs, and I asked myself what chance we who would labor at the oars could have of hearing such commands as might be given from time to time after we had begun the apparently impossible work?

I am not ashamed to say that I was a regular coward in face of all the perils which confronted us, and for the first time since leaving Philadelphia I would have rejoiced at the opportunity of changing places with the shipkeeper on board the Princess.

I should have been faint-hearted had we counted on performing the task in the daylight; but to make the effort during a night that promised to be pitchy dark and amid a howling gale, seemed much like madness.

The one idea in my mind was to keep the other lads from realizing how frightened I had become, and to such end I moved here or there without other aim or purpose than to avoid the necessity of speaking with my comrades. And it was not difficult to thus remain alone in the midst of a throng; all of our party showed a decided disinclination to converse on any subject, and it may have been that among them were other hearts as cowardly as mine.

The night was just closing in when we were told off into crews—eight men to each barge, six to every whale-boat, and so on according to the size of the craft.

As a matter of course the fleet could not be launched at once, for the current and the ice

would soon have carried it away ; but the boats were in position to be pushed into the water whenever the word should be given, and each crew waited in or near the craft to which it had been assigned.

Zenas, Reuben and I were detailed to one of the whale-boats, the remainder of our crew being made up of lads from Massachusetts.

Father and Moses, as I understood, were in charge of a barge in which some of the officers would embark, while the others of our company from Long Island were scattered here or there according to the fancy of those in command.

We three lads, meaning Zenas, Reuben and myself, crawled under the lee of our craft while we waited the coming of the troops, and there we were like to have frozen to death, so cold was the air and so penetrating the icy blast.

“We won’t do much by way of complaining yet awhile,” Zenas replied grimly, when I suggested that we might be stiff and lifeless before the soldiers came along. “It is comfortable here compared with what it will be in mid-stream when we are coated with ice, for the spray and sleet is freezing wherever it falls.”

“It doesn’t stand to reason that the soldiers will be able to do very much fighting after a

march of nine miles, to say nothing of the distance they must come before embarking," Reuben suggested. "There won't be a single charge of dry powder among them, and the Britishers should be able to whip them without any great trouble."

No one made reply to this remark ; it was much too disagreeable a subject to be continued under all the circumstances, and we were yet keeping silent when the advance guard of the army marched up.

From that time on, until nearly nine hours had passed, we had no time to converse, or to realize whether we were suffering more than should have been expected.

It was in this fashion that we set about the work of ferrying two thousand five hundred men across that raging torrent, and credit should be given General Glover for the precision of his preparations, although I doubt not that Long Island could have produced fishermen, or sailors generally, who would have made very capable hands at conducting the work.

The manner of embarking one boat-load was the same as another, therefore when I have told of what our crew did, it is as if I had described each in turn.

According to the general's commands we were to carry twenty men in our boat, and that number were ordered out of line when the head of the column arrived near where we were stationed.

Then Zenas, who acted as our captain, warned the soldiers to be ready to leap on board as soon as the craft was water-borne, cautioning them at the same time that we would launch the boat at the first opportune moment and she must be loaded before the next cake of ice was hurled toward us.

The men, fearing to face the danger and yet ashamed to let their companions understand such fact, obeyed implicitly, and from the moment Zenas gave the word to run our boat into the water, until she was well under way, everything went like clockwork.

Only cool-headed soldiers of experience could have performed the work which we did that night with but trifling mishaps, compared with the number of men whose lives were in peril.

Once our craft was afloat two men plied four oars, while the remainder of our crew were stationed fore and aft to ward off the oncoming ice, and at the same time aid the progress by shoving against the masses which had floated to leeward. The oarsmen accomplished little save when, at rare

intervals, we were in clear water. The greater portion of the labor was performed by those who worked with iron-shod poles which had been especially prepared for the occasion.

It goes without saying that we made no attempt at striking straight across the current, else would we have been carried miles below the point it was necessary to gain. The boats were headed up-stream, as if the purpose was to ascend the river, and thus we contrived to make nearly as much headway as we did sternway while we worked toward the opposite bank, but every inch of progress was won by the most severe labor.

The sleet stung our eyes and faces like needles, and for many minutes at a time was it absolutely impossible for me to see what might be going on, because of the terrible pain in my eyeballs. The wind had full rake upon us, and in five minutes our clothing was stiff as so much sheet-iron, owing to the coating of ice which formed upon it; but yet we did not suffer excessively from the cold. We were indulging in such violent exercise that the blood fairly boiled in our veins; but the soldiers, who had orders to remain motionless under all circumstances, must have suffered severely from the freezing moisture.

We gained a yard up-stream only to be swept

back again when the ice-pack tore down upon us like some living monster, and then would come the struggle to regain our ground.

At times we would be carried half a mile or more down the river, and again we found open water where the oarsmen could get in their work, while we who labored with the poles had an opportunity of regaining breath.

It was a furious fight against the elements, while never for a moment did it seem possible we could succeed, and yet we came off victors after a time.

How many minutes or hours we spent in getting the first load of passengers across I could not have said ; but I knew full well we had conquered only to begin a new battle, and it seemed as if we must finally be overcome.

Once on the other side and the soldiers disembarked, Zenas allowed us to rest until we began to be sensible of the cold, and then our craft was launched into that tumult of water and ice once more.

Because of having no load, we gained the other shore in less time than had been occupied by the first fight, and as soon as we were come to the bank another cargo was ready for us.

By this time every craft was afloat, and we not

only found it necessary to struggle against the floating ice, but to prevent ourselves from crashing into other boats, when dire disaster must have resulted.

Whether the lads from Massachusetts outstripped us in the battle, or if we from Long Island proved ourselves their superiors, I am unable to say. Since that fearful night I have heard the question discussed again and again; but never believed it was settled beyond a doubt. Certain it is, however, that all hands fought to the utmost of their strength and ability, and the task which had seemed so impossible, was finally accomplished.

We who served under Zenas made five round trips, and then I was so nearly exhausted that had it been to save my own life I could not have done a full share of putting the boat across once more.

The army had been landed, and we were ordered to remain by the fleet lest, peradventure, General Washington's force was compelled to beat a retreat across the river, when it would be our duty to act as ferrymen again so long as the enemy might permit.

It was also ordered that no fires be lighted, for a single tiny flame might have betrayed to the

Britishers that which it was so important should be kept a secret, and we, wet to the skin, covered with ice, and fatigued to the verge of exhaustion, were forced to remain without shelter on the bank of the river while the soldiers marched away.

Zenas ordered us to turn our craft bottom up on the shore, and after the windward side had been banked with snow to prevent the chilling blast from finding entrance, we crept beneath it to get such warmth as might be had from each other by huddling close together.

We had labored without ceasing more than ten hours ; but probably our condition was not worse than that of the soldiers who had been ferried across early in the evening, since these last were obliged to remain exposed to the full fury of the gale until the last detachment had made the passage.

To occupy our minds so that we might not dwell upon the painful situation, we discussed the probable movements of the army ; speculated whether General Cadwallader's division had already crossed from Bristol, or if General Ewing's force found the passage at Trenton ferry more difficult than we had so much further up the river.

There was never one among us who believed that the movement would prove a success.

The most we dared hope for was that our army might get safely back on the Pennsylvania side of the river after inflicting some little damage upon the enemy.

It seemed absolutely impossible that half frozen soldiers, whose ammunition must have been soaked with water—men who were fatigued with a long night march amid the swirling snow and stinging sleet, could stand up for a single moment against the old, well-seasoned Hessians who held Trenton.

On that terrible night we blamed General Washington for lack of judgment, although not one dared put the thought into words, and believed that this last move was the despairing effort of a man who had been rendered desperate by serious reverses.

After a time we ceased to hold converse one with another; the winter's chill had fastened upon us, and we were like to have frozen to death beneath the boat had not Zenas, ever alive to all the circumstances, forced us to run to and fro on the bank, when the day had broke, to set the sluggish blood into circulation.

We lads from Long Island naturally flocked

together at such a time, and a more despairing, haggard-looking set of fellows I never saw as we waited there for the return of an army which we believed would come as fugitives, with the Britishers close at their heels.

CHAPTER XIX.

HONORABLE DISCHARGE.

EVEN at this late day, when the independence of the Colonies is fully assured, thanks to the generalship and patriotism of the gentleman from Virginia, I am amazed as I look back upon that terrible Christmas night and realize that our people won a most signal victory.

We who paced to and fro on the river bank, half frozen and wholly given over to dispiriting forebodings, saw a detachment of troops coming from the direction of Trenton shortly after noon, and the cry went up :

“Some of them have escaped ! Get ready the boats !”

Because our people delayed so long in the coming, many of us had really begun to believe that the entire army had been captured, and it can well be fancied how incredulous we were when the newcomers claimed that General Washington had whipped the Hessians out of their boots, killing their commander, Colonel Rall, and seventeen of his men. A full thousand of the king's

soldiers had surrendered at discretion, and instead of fleeing before the Britishers, our general had probably put a stop to the home visit of my Lord Cornwallis.

In this wonderful battle of Trenton we had lost only two men, who were killed, but during that painful march two others had literally frozen to death.

And fancy, if you will, that all this work had been done by those troops we ferried across !

The other two divisions had remained through the night on the Pennsylvania side of the river !

The boatmen who had been sent to transport General Cadwallader's force, turned back after getting nearly half-way across, and decided that it was impossible to accomplish the task.

The Pennsylvanians who were to carry General Ewing's portion of the army never even attempted the task ; one glance of that turbulent river filled with ice was too much for them, and they made no effort to cross.

How we Massachusetts and Long Island lads plumed ourselves after learning that we had done what all the other boatmen balked at !

We danced with joy because of what our general had accomplished, and in pride of our own achievements !

We had not turned back when it seemed as if certain death awaited him who should put forth in a boat ! We had not remained under shelter because the sleet blinded, and the wind froze us until we were well-nigh helpless ! We had fought against the river, the ice, and the storm, and come off victorious as did those we ferried across !

All along the river front resounded cheers for our gentleman from Virginia ; for the troops he led through the sleet and snow ; for Massachusetts colony and her boatmen, and, lastly for Long Island lads who had held their own and a little more on this Christmas night when death walked hand in hand with them !

Forgotten was our hunger now ; we no longer gave heed to the fact that we were frost-bitten, stiff in every joint, or that the garments which we wore were shells of ice rather than anything made for warmth or protection against the weather. All was as nothing in view of the wondrous fact that we had won a most glorious victory at the very time when it seemed as if the Cause was hopelessly lost !

What roaring fires we built, aided by the detachment of soldiers that had been sent forward to spread the cheering news ! How we toasted

our aching shins and cheered for Washington, Massachusetts and Long Island !

And, finally, what a glorious day it was altogether !

But we who had been detailed to man the fleet had by no means come to an end of our labors.

General Washington had decided that, after striking such a blow, it would be prudent to return to Pennsylvania soil, putting the ice-laden river between him and the British hordes which might come hot foot to avenge the flogging. Therefore we boatmen had a yet harder, but not so dangerous, task before us, for in addition to those we had carried across during the night, we were forced to ferry over a thousand Hessians, as many stands of arms, and six pieces of artillery.

We did the job, however, singing and rejoicing all the while, and when the tired army was once more in the apology for a camp near the falls of Trenton, we lads took possession of our shed again.

It would be useless for me to make any attempt at repeating all we said or did during the four and twenty hours we remained there, for our conversation and our rejoicing was but a repetition of what we had indulged in on the bank of

the river when first the joyful tidings were brought.

There was one subject, however, which had not been mentioned in the first flush of victory, but was now discussed freely, and that was as to whether we should return to Smithtown Bay, or cast in our fortune with the army.

While recruits were needed so sadly there was no question but that we should be gladly received ; but would it be playing fairly toward Captain Hyler, to whom we were in a certain degree bound ?

He was in a position to work much injury to the enemy, and might, in a small way, accomplish great good for the Cause.

Should we return to him, or remain where we had already won much credit for ourselves ?

It was Zenas who settled this question after we had talked and argued an hour or more, and he did it simply by stating what was his own purpose.

“As the case looks to me, I’m bound to report to Captain Hyler. The lads of the whale-boat navy have shown what they are capable of doing, and if so much can be accomplished by them, it is best they hold together under the leadership of one who enjoys the confidence of General

Washington himself. As soon as we are discharged from service here, I count on going aboard the Princess again, getting under way, and putting her into Smithtown Bay with the least possible delay.

It went without saying that we Dunkels would follow Zenas, and, seeing this, the remainder of the company decided that no other course could be honorably pursued.

In less than half an hour after we had arrived at this decision all hands of us were summoned before General Glover, who had followed the commander-in-chief to headquarters.

We found him standing outside the building, and if I should set down here all the words of praise he bestowed upon us, there would be good reason for accusing me of taking advantage of the opportunity to speak my own praise. Therefore it is I shall only say that my father came in for a goodly share of fine words; that we were all complimented until it really seemed as if we must walk on stilts during the remainder of our lives, and the general wound up by offering rapid advancement if we chose to stay with the army.

Then my father explained why we believed it necessary to go back to Long Island when our services as boatmen were no longer required, and

made the general acquainted with the decision we had so lately arrived at, concluding by saying :

“ When we are discharged, sir, we desire to retrace our steps, believing that we may do more for the Cause in the whale-boat service than we could on land.”

“ You are honorably discharged,” the general said with a smile, “ and you are to take back with you the personal thanks of General Washington, who has instructed me to speak in his name. He desires to reward you in some more substantial manner than mere words, and to that end I request that each of you call upon the quartermaster-general.”

“ May I ask if the commander counts on paying us for our services ?” my father asked quickly, and General Glover replied :

“ That is his intention. The camp chest is not well filled, I will admit ; but there should be something to spare for such as you.”

“ We beg that nothing of the kind be done, sir, and I now speak for every lad present. We have entered the service without thought of earning money, for in the whale-boat navy there is no mention made of wages, therefore it would not be well for us to take any dollars from the army, more especially since they can be used for a better

purpose than that of paying for labor which we were proud to perform."

When my father came to a pause the general bowed without speaking, and suddenly entered the building, leaving us standing outside wondering whether we should return to the shed, or begin the march to Philadelphia.

We were yet discussing among ourselves as to what it was proper to do, considering the fact that we had not been really dismissed, when the door of the building was opened and General Washington himself appeared.

Never have I seen so friendly, cheery a smile as was on the face of our gentleman from Virginia when he bowed to us.

"You have rendered valuable service to the cause of freedom, my lads," he said, bowing again, and I was like to have cried aloud with joy because words of praise were addressed to me by such as him. "I thank you most heartily, and if the time comes that I need your aid, I shall not hesitate to summon you. General Glover will see to it that you are given transportation to Philadelphia, and I wish you well. Convey my thanks to Captain Hyler for having sent me such efficient men."

Then he bowed and reentered the building,

leaving us standing there so puffed up with pride because the commander-in-chief had personally praised us, that they might as well have let us tramp to the city, since we would never have known whether we went on our heads or our heels, therefore the journey need not have fatigued us.

It is the one rich memory which I shall carry to the grave with me, and be fully conscious of it at the last moment of life, that General Washington thanked me for having done a valuable service for himself and the Cause !

It is here that I count on bringing this overly long story to an end, because among all the adventures which were mine while serving under Captain Hyler there is none so full of glory as that which I have just set down, and he who can wind up a poor tale with such a scene, would be unwise to continue it further.

True we served under Captain Hyler several years, and on more than one occasion were so fortunate as to be summoned by General Washington ; but the only time he ever publicly thanked us, was after we had performed our small share toward gaining the victory at Trenton. And I daresay there never was a time when a victory was more sorely needed to revive the courage of

those who were giving their all, even venturing life itself, to the cause of liberty.

We left headquarters next morning in farm wagons, and late that evening surprised our ship-keeper on board the Princess.

It would have pleased all our company very much could we have spent a few days in Philadelphia, but the river yet remained open ; there was every reason to believe it would be frozen over before many days had passed, and we were eager to sail the sloop into Smithtown Bay.

During the remainder of that winter we were forced to stay close in camp nearly all the time ; but we managed to strike a blow at the Tories now and then, and among other satisfactory doings was that of finally disposing of our prisoners, which we did by carrying them to General Putnam after he occupied Princeton.

What finally became of Simon Hunt I am unable to say ; we never heard from him directly again, although it was rumored in Flushing that he had shipped on board a British frigate. At all events, none of us who belonged to Captain Hyler's whale-boat navy saw him again.

Two years later Captain Downes reappeared in Flushing, with a safe-conduct from General Sullivan, he having convinced that officer of his

innocence so far as doing a wrong to Whigs was concerned ; but he was never able to make any one on Long Island believe such a yarn, and after occupying his old home a few weeks he decided that it would be more pleasant, as well as safer, to move south where he was not so well known.

Elijah Cornwall paid the penalty of his crime at last ; but we of the whale-boat navy had no hand in the final scene. After having attempted to betray us, he went to New York, and, six months later, offered his services as spy to General Howe. He was sent into New Jersey, was captured by the Continental forces under circumstances which admitted of no misconstruction as to the reason for his being there, and hanged with but little ceremony.

In the spring of '77 I was given command of the Princess, which craft had come to be considered as a portion of Captain Hyler's navy, and, therefore, my story naturally ends itself, since I only set out to tell of Amos Dunkel as an "oarsman," and it would not be well to continue it after I had been made a captain.

From the New Jersey Gazette, September 25th, 1782.

"Died, September 6th, after a tedious and painful illness, which he bore with a great deal of fortitude, the brave Captain Adam Hyler, of New Brunswick. His many enterprising acts in annoying and distressing the enemy, endeared him to

the patriotic part of his acquaintances. He has left a wife and two small children to bewail his death. His remains were decently interred, with a display of the honors of war, in the Dutch burial-ground, attended by a very numerous concourse of his acquaintances.

“ Captain Hyler died of a wound in the knee, accidentally given by himself some time ago.”

From the New Jersey Gazette, November 13th, 1782.

“ The brave Captain Amos Dunkel, commissioned as a private boat-of-war, under the States, and who promises fair to be the genuine successor of the late valiant Captain Hyler, has given a recent instance of his valor and conduct in capturing one of the enemy's vessels, and in cutting out a vessel lying under the flag-staff and within half pistol shot of the battery of fourteen guns at the watering place, Staten Island.”

THE END.

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